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The Left and Crime

Elliott Currie, Ester Fuchs, and Randall Kennedy argue with him

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The Lure of Times Square

MORRIS DICKSTEIN
The Values of Meyer Schapiro

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Democracy, Merit, and Virtue

NICOLAUS MILLS
Monumental Correctness

- Harold Meyerson: Can Liberalism Survive Clinton?
- Linda Kerber: The Meanings of Citizenship
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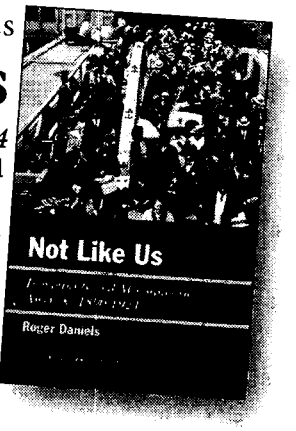

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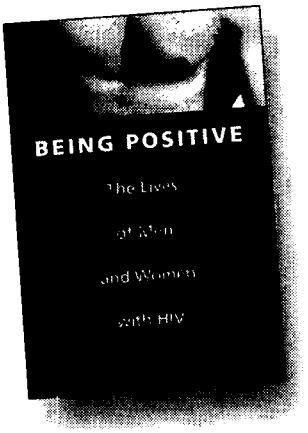

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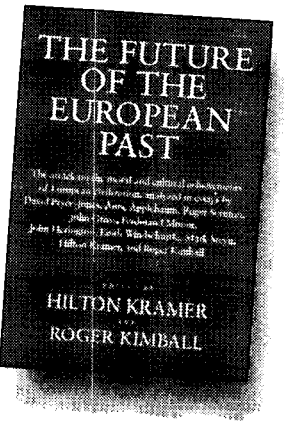

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Editor's Page

It has been said about *Dissent*'s editors and writers that we turn to culture only when politics is impossible for us, when the left is defeated or in the doldrums. Cultural criticism is an antidote for, or a diversion from, political pessimism and incapacity. But as soon as there is any sort of revival, the smallest sense of possibility, we are quick to turn away from literature, art, music, architecture, and popular culture, and come back to "real" politics as if to our natural vocation. (The easiest example of these changes is the large number of articles on mass culture that appeared in the magazine in the 1950s, dropping to near zero in the course of the sixties.)

Maybe we are repeating this old story with our latest return to cultural criticism—begun in the last few issues and fully apparent in this one. Of course, we have been writing about culture for a long time insofar as it plays a part in identity politics and "multiculturalism." We have covered the culture/canon/science wars, though always from a distance generated by our uneasiness with both sides in those mostly academic struggles. And we have written, more sporadically, about the reflection of politics in the mass media, and about the effects of the media on political behavior. But we mean now to address in a more consistent way the tendencies of American (and global, which is partly the same thing) cultural life. Two of our editors, Nicolaus Mills and George Packer, will take primary responsibility for an ongoing coverage of cultural events and artifacts, achievements and disasters. Articles in this issue on Meyer Schapiro, Times Square, and the new Roosevelt Memorial in Washington suggest the range we will aim for.

Are we, then, in the political doldrums? Yes and no. Only a madman could write glowingly about American politics right now. But with center-left governments in much of Europe, there is certainly room for a little tough-minded optimism—and then for articles that assess the opportunities opened up by recent electoral victories (in Portugal, Italy, Britain, and France) and criticize the sometimes faltering will to seize them. We will attempt both assessment and criticism in coming issues in a series of articles on the problems of European social democracy.

So we don't want cultural criticism to replace politics; most of us, indeed, accept Todd Gitlin's hostile account of that replacement in his piece on "cultural studies" in the Spring 1997 issue. The magazine has to include both, on the understanding that culture is expressive of politics and that politics is an enactment of culture. The two are autonomous; the two are closely related. The same ambiguous connection that we have long recognized between politics and economics exists also between political and cultural activity; and the same dissent from conventional (left and right) accounts of that connection is necessary in both cases.

The Arguments section continues to be one of the most popular parts of the magazine, and we are tempted to crowd everything into it—for isn't everything in *Dissent* an argument? But we will try to confine it to debates about issues critical to the self-understanding and programmatic commitments of the left. And the complex question of crime and crime-fighting is certainly an issue of that sort, where center-left candidates have had a hard time figuring out not only what they ought to say but what they are prepared to do. Michael Tomasky offers a strong critique of their positions, which is strongly criticized in turn by three of the left's most knowledgeable writers on these questions.

In Winter 1998, we will present a redesigned *Dissent* to our readers: logo, cover, pages, all made over. We will approach the year 2000 with the "content of our character" unchanged but newly dressed up for the occasion.

—M.W. □

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George Packer

NOTES ON CONFUSION

I spent a good part of my summer reading cures for liberalism. One prescribed a limited but activist government; another a colorblind, egalitarian nationalism; others an affirmation of democratic universalism, a revival of civic republicanism, a program of economic populism, or a judicious mix of autonomy, diversity, and solidarity. I agreed with them—all of them, even ones that contradicted others or were self-contradictory. In public philosophy anything seems possible, so in the reading such books can be completely persuasive, but afterward tend to melt away, like daydreams in the afternoon heat, leaving you groping to remember the verbal formula that had been so reassuring just a short time ago.

I also read American history, and there the effect was the opposite. In the hard world of fact, reform looks like a rare and fragile thing, forced to maneuver in the narrow straits between money power and public opinion, always the outcome of particular conditions that cannot be duplicated, and none more so than the New Deal, which seems more and more like an extraordinary subplot in the American story of self-interested pursuit backed up by the Bill of Rights.

Woodrow Wilson, who had reason to know, said that the reform impulse comes once every twenty years and is lucky to last a single term, which was why he refused the advice of his young assistant secretary of the Navy to delay part of his program until a second term. Twenty years later, the assistant secretary took Wilson's words to heart and put the New Deal on a fast track. Roosevelt's moment of opportunity lasted slightly longer than Wilson's, then it, too, was gone.

On September 25, 1912, campaigning in New Haven, Wilson confronted a dilemma that has been troubling liberals ever since. In the modern era, he said, life had become tremendously complex, and the size of corporations threatened individual freedom in a new way. He reminded his audience that Jefferson had warned against excessive government interference in the activities of citizens, a warning that had been gospel to the Democratic Party ever since. By raising the spirit of Jefferson, Wilson was admitting that modern conditions posed a conflict with inherited values—that the rise of trusts presented a difficult knot for Democrats. Then he proceeded rhetorically to untie it:

> But I feel confident that if Jefferson were living in our day he would see what we see: that the individual is caught in a great confused nexus of all sorts of complicated circumstances, and that to let him alone is to leave him helpless against the obstacles with which he has to contend; and that, therefore, law in our day must come to the assistance of the individual. It must come to his assistance to see that he gets fair play; that is all, but that is much. . . . Freedom today is something more than being let alone.

Modern life, especially the practices of large corporations, had made government interference in the economy necessary for freedom—the "New Freedom." With this insight a progressive could remain a Jeffersonian. Wilson had seen a dilemma, acknowledged it, and deftly resolved it. He had also scored points on the stump. By couching the problem of trusts as a matter of restoring freedom to the individual, Wilson was positioning himself against Theodore Roosevelt, whose brand of progressivism accepted the fact of increasing bigness

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in American life, proposing to use government to regulate or take over monopoly but not break it up.

T.R.'s intellectual champion, Herbert Croly, had already anticipated Wilson's argument and refuted it three years earlier, in his book *The Promise of American Life*: "The central government in its policy toward the large corporations must adopt one of two courses. Either it must discriminate in their favor or it must discriminate against them. The third alternative—that of being what is called 'impartial'—has no real existence." In other words, Wilson's idea of eliminating unfair trade practices and reverting to an older system of free economic individualism, in which government took no sides, was a fantasy. Trusts existed *because of* fair play and equal rights; bigness was inescapable. Social justice required enlarging the state, not reducing the corporations. "Thus the Jeffersonian principle of national irresponsibility can no longer be maintained by those Democrats who sincerely believe that the inequalities of power generated in the American economic and political system are dangerous to the integrity of the democratic state."

Wilson won the argument in 1912. But the dilemma refused to be resolved so easily. New Freedom reforms like the Federal Trade Commission ended up regulating monopoly instead of competition. After America entered the European war in 1917, the War Industries Board undertook the first large-scale nationalization of the economy. The wartime Espionage Act deprived individual freedoms like no piece of legislation since the Alien and Sedition Act of 1798, which Jefferson ran against in 1800. By 1918 events, conditions, and his own choices had Wilson presiding over a vastly more powerful national state, far closer to Roosevelt and Croly's New Nationalism than to the New Freedom. A decade and a half later, the New Deal accelerated and consolidated the trend. For the better part of the twentieth century, Herbert Croly won the argument.

But the worm turned again, and the ghosts of Jefferson and Jackson came back to haunt their party. Since the 1960s, the traditional Democratic slogan of "Equal rights for all, special privileges for none" has worked against liberals and in favor of conservatives. Individualism turns out to be a value Americans won't turn over to "national purpose" quite so willingly as Croly imagined. Wilson's dilemma remains unresolved.

Liberals today face a problem indirectly inherited from the Progressive era and similar to Wilson's in one way. He tried to carry the flag for nineteenth-century ideas in a new era of economic concentration; liberals now carry the flag for twentieth-century ideas in a new era of political decentralization nationally and economic concentration globally. Neither one of these two trends is hospitable to the social contract prevailing since the 1930s and its primary guarantor, the federal government. We are trying to remain New Dealers, as Wilson tried to remain a Jeffersonian, when it may no longer be possible.

Most efforts to find a way out take Wilson's rhetorical route of squaring the circle and having it both ways. A recent essay in the *Nation*, which has been running a useful series called "First Principles," acknowledged the persistence of anti-federalism in American life by proposing a new liberalism based on the principle of "autonomy." This autonomy "would blend individualism and collective obligation, by considering people as neighbors who inhabit partially common and partially separate spaces."

This kind of formula doesn't so much resolve the dilemma as point up its existence. It is better for the moment to admit that "individualism and collective obligation" are not a blend but values in conflict and not at all easy to reconcile. Part of liberals' trouble comes from an unwillingness to face that some of the most important dilemmas of our time are dilemmas at all. One example is welfare. It only became permissible to acknowledge the destructive aspects of the system when it was too late, the momentum for drastic change too great. (Of course, those prepared to eliminate the welfare guarantee were themselves unwilling to face the dilemma between the value of work and the well-being of poor children.) The fact that the public now seems ready to spend money on day care, transportation, and other

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programs to enable poor people to get and keep work suggests that the liberal explanation of welfare hatred—meanness and more than a little racism—was partly wrong. It had at least as much to do with work and idleness as with black and white, and if liberals had recognized that sooner then we might have been spared the end of the federal guarantee. During last year's congressional debate of the welfare bill, welfare advocates were paralyzed by their own intellectual bankruptcy—for too long they had been defending the indefensible. Perhaps Daniel Patrick Moynihan's was the only strong opposing voice because he admitted the dilemma three decades ago.

For any thinking liberal, this must be a time of enormous confusion. Part of the confusion is over practical dilemmas. When the world is moving in a direction you don't want it to go, what should you do? Adjust, or wait it out? Where is the line drawn between prudent compromise and shameful capitulation? But the more serious confusion is intellectual. If, say, we appear to have reached the end of Keynesian growth-oriented national economics and the social contract it underwrote, what should we do then? Should we find a way to make the new era ours, like T.R., or reassert the old ideals in new terms, like Wilson?

At a time like this the essential virtues are imagination, self-scrutiny, a willingness to question the most basic ideas. Confusion serves the beneficial purpose of leaving one to the mercies of experience. But allowing experience to make an impression requires an effort of will. Dilemmas are unpleasant to live with for long; confusion is not a natural state for the mind used to preparedness for debate. By habit we know what we think, especially in public. You can read a long article apparently full of the spirit of self-questioning and discover at the end that the author hasn't entertained one really new thought, like a dog sniffing all over the yard before going to squat in the same old spot. Confusion requires training. If, for example, you make a point of reading to the end of news stories that contradict your view of things (like reports of increased state spending on welfare-to-work pro-

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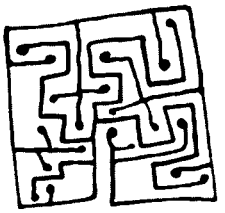

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grams), you will be better equipped to deal with genuine dilemmas than those who go on fattening their file of clippings that prove them right. It might even be a good idea to start a file of items that suggest you were wrong.

Language plays a key role in disguising confusion from self and others. Abstract terms like equality, freedom, community, and justice do at least as much to enable thinking around dilemmas as thinking through them. If someone prescribes a cure for liberalism in these terms only, demand the details and the all-important question "how?" The very words "liberal" and "left" should probably be avoided as much as possible for the foreseeable future (note to myself). Their use, implying an organized body of people and ideas, is flattering but doesn't correspond to the reality of incoherence and flux and may prevent us from recognizing unlikely allies and useful ideas when they come along. No one knows what the next reform impulse will look like or where it will come from. It could come from evangelical Christians or from state legislators. Moral qualities, such as social sympathy and intellectual courage, count for more right now than ideological consistency: a generous heart and an open mind. If this sounds dangerously like softheadedness, that's one more dilemma. □

Susan Moller Okin

DEMOCRACY AND THE SUPREME COURT

The marriage of capitalism and democracy has never been easy. Serious tensions exist between the economic inequalities toward which capitalism tends and the political equality that democracy requires. These tensions are greatest when disparities of income and wealth are most extreme, as they are in the United States compared with other basically democratic countries, but they can be reduced by the vigilant maintenance of legal barriers prohibiting the translation of wealth into political power. Restricting campaign expenditures is one crucial means of doing this. However, for more than two decades now, in the United States, the most important such barriers have been ruled out as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. In 1974, in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, Congress radically amended the Federal Election Act so as to restrict both campaign contributions and expenditures, but the amendments were eviscerated two years later by the Court's decision in *Buckley v. Valeo*. The Court found that, though the limits on contributions and disclosure requirements were constitutional, the limits placed on campaign expenditures and on independent expenditures on behalf of a candidate were in violation of the free speech clause of the First Amendment. Basically, the Court equated money with speech. Wisely, the Clinton administration now seeks to ask the Supreme Court to review its decision. For without such a reversal, on the urgent issue of ever-escalating campaign expenditures, Congress's hands are tied.

Since the 1950s, but especially since the mid-seventies, campaign expenditures have escalated geometrically. To illustrate: the limit struck down by the Court in *Buckley* for a senator's campaign was (in 1976 dollars) $100,000 for the primary and $150,000 for the general election; by contrast, in 1994, Michael Huffington spent about thirty million dollars on his senate campaign. In addition to this sheer escalation of expenditures, in the last two presidential campaigns and the 1994 California senate race, the influence of wealth on politics showed itself when individuals with little, if any, previous political track record—Ross Perot, Huffington, and Malcolm Forbes—literally

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bought themselves a significant voice in the public debates.

Instead of reacting to these changes in such a way as to restore our democracy, the Supreme Court has used subsequent cases to make things worse. Since the *Buckley* decision, a number of other legislative attempts to control political expenditures have been blocked by the Court. It has found, for example, that corporations, as well as natural persons, have rights of "free speech" that significantly restrict legislated limits on their spending on political issues (*First National Bank v. Bellotti* [1978]). It has also found that party expenditures explicitly spent attacking the other party's candidate, presumably because such expenditures are not for the election of a specific candidate, do not have to be counted under any spending limits that exist (*Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Committee v. Federal Election Commission* [1996]).

In the first, pivotal case, *Buckley v. Valeo*, the Court reasoned that controls placed on spending in political campaigns, whether by individual candidates or parties, violate the free speech guarantee of the First Amendment. Although the Court decided that limits on individual contributions were justified, in order to reduce both the likelihood and the appearance of corruption, it ruled that limits on spending were not. Neither, it decided, were limits on the amounts that might be spent by an individual or that individual's family on his or her own campaign for office. The crux of the Court's reasoning was that it is in the people's interest to have more, rather than less, discussion relating to political issues and to the qualifications of candidates, and that the expenditure limitations would restrict the quantity of political speech that would occur, including "the number of issues discussed, the depth of their exploration, and the size of the audience reached." The Court specifically addressed the issue, prominent in discussions of democracy, of whether it is justifiable for the democratic process to try to equalize the political influence of citizens. Surprisingly, to those of us who think democracy has something to do with political equality, it answered negatively: "[T]he concept that government may restrict the speech of some elements in our society in order to enhance the relative voice of others is wholly foreign to the First Amendment, which was designed 'to secure the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources.' "

The Court's reasoning in *Buckley* has been criticized by a number of people, from Justice J. Skelly Wright in 1976 to Laurence Tribe, John Rawls, and Ronald Dworkin more recently. It is of compelling importance that this ruling be reversed, because it is fundamentally opposed to the political equality of citizens that is at the heart of democracy. Despite this, in the related case in 1996, only two of the current justices dissented from the overall reasoning of the *Buckley* opinion, and Justice Thomas even argued that that earlier ruling was *too* permissive and should not have allowed the restriction of contributions at all. On the other hand, it is by no means unheard of for the Court to reverse one of its own decisions, even within a short time span. Between 1940 and 1943, for example, largely because of the growth of totalitarianism and the fact that Hitler was by the second date officially the enemy, the Court reversed its position on whether school children should be compelled to salute the flag.

When Supreme Court decisions are based on bad reasoning, they should be overruled, which can only be done, of course, by the Court itself. The Court reasoned badly in *Buckley* in four respects. The first problem is more obvious in hindsight than it was in 1976, but this raises questions about the satisfaction with which most members of the current Court apparently view that earlier decision. I question the assumption, central to the deciding opinion in that case, that there is something positive about the *quantity* of speech during a political campaign and that therefore the more money that is spent on such speech, the better. The deciding opinion in *Buckley* states over and over that the discussion of issues and of candidates' qualifications is beneficial to the democratic process, and infers from this that not restricting the dollars spent on such speech will enhance this benefit. It is, however, extremely doubtful that the dollar

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amounts spent on political campaigns correlate positively with the amount of actual discussion or dissemination of information that takes place. Rather, it seems, as more and more money has been spent on campaigns, discussion and relevant information have more often than not been drowned out by flashy media imagery, ever-shorter sound bites, and overwhelmingly negative campaigning.

The Dianne Feinstein/Michael Huffington campaign illustrates this point. By bombarding the California public with increasingly nasty ads about such issues as which of the two candidates' housekeepers was more illegal than the other's, it showed the negative effects that spending tens of millions of dollars can have on an election campaign. Indeed, this very point was made in Justices Stevens and Ginsburg's dissent in the 1996 case. They wrote: "It is quite wrong to assume that the net effect of limits on contributions and expenditures—which tend to protect equal access to the political arena, to free candidates and their staffs from the interminable burden of fund-raising, and to diminish the importance of repetitive thirty-second commercials—will be adverse to the interest in informed debate protected by the First Amendment." They are right to question the assumption of the majority that more discussion or informed debate results from more, rather than less, expenditure on political campaigns.

Second, it seems reasonable to ask why the Court in 1976 did not adopt a more questioning attitude toward the high costs of political campaigns. The Court's opinion simply takes it as given that expensive modes of communication such as television, radio, and other mass media are "indispensable instruments of effective political speech," so that "the raising of large sums of money [is] an ever more essential ingredient of an effective candidacy." They never pause to consider what might happen if the fairly strict spending limits passed by Congress were allowed to stand. Surely it is not out of the question that, *with* strict limits on spending, the nature of political campaigning might have evolved in a very different way than it has done. There might by now be far more reliance on volunteers, on grass-roots organizations, on door-to-door campaigning—all of which would have enhanced popular participation in politics and would have increased the amount of discussion, the actual give and take of political ideas, that would occur. Instead, the Court's view of the necessary connection between political campaigns and money was a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The third problem with the *Buckley* ruling is encapsulated in part of the passage quoted above from the Court's opinion, in which it is argued that any attempt to equalize opportunities for political speech runs contrary to the First Amendment, the purpose of which is to proliferate "information from *diverse and antagonistic sources*." The problem here is fairly obvious. Because different individuals and groups in society have unequal financial resources, the information generated in the absence of some attempt at equalizing such resources is likely to be extremely slanted toward the views of those individuals and groups who can afford the most "political speech." Even a very large group of average citizens would have a hard time competing financially, so as to be equally able to exercise its right of free speech, with the Philip Morris Company or the Lockheed Corporation.

Finally, the greatest failing of the *Buckley* decision was a failure of imagination—in particular, the imagination it takes to speculate about how to interpret in the present clauses or terms of the Constitution that were framed in very different circumstances. It was the same kind of failure of imagination that a much earlier Supreme Court majority displayed in 1927 when they refused to recognize that wire-tapping by the federal government to obtain evidence in a criminal case amounted to violation of individuals' rights not to be subjected to "unreasonable searches and seizures." Justice Brandeis's dissent in that case (*Olmstead v. U.S.*) is a model of the kind of imagination that needs to be exercised in such cases. Brandeis looks back to the time when the Fourth Amendment was adopted, noting that, at that time, breaking and entering were the only means the government had of invading a person's private space in the ways the amendment was designed to prohibit. By the 1920s, however, wire-tapping had

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become another means of doing the same thing. And, Brandeis argued, using his imagination well, scientific progress may one day enable the government "without removing papers from secret drawers, [to] reproduce them in court, . . . by which it will be enabled to expose to a jury the most intimate occurrences of the home." Thus, in order to apply the Fourth Amendment sensibly, he argued, one had to think both about what it meant when it was written and how it should be understood in the contemporary context.

The same imaginative thinking was clearly needed in the *Buckley* case. The means by which one can express oneself in speech in the late twentieth century are so different from those of the late eighteenth century that the Court cannot interpret the First Amendment sensibly without taking them into consideration. When the amendment was worded it was, of course, unthinkable that the media might one day enable persons with vast amounts of money to "speak" simultaneously within every living room in the country. Interpreting the amendment sensibly now requires that we think not only about the relation between free speech and democracy, but also about the relation between political speech and money in the context of such modern technological advances. The Court in *Buckley*, as we have seen, was not at all inclined to do this. It simply took for granted the easy translatability of money into late-twentieth-century political speech, rather than asking how we should interpret the Constitution's guarantee of free speech in such a context. It could learn much from Brandeis's dissent.

For anyone who is serious about the necessity for democracy of maintaining a high degree of political equality among citizens, the translation of economic inequalities into political ones is a most urgent problem. Trying to get the Supreme Court to think differently about campaign financing is the best place to start dealing with it. □

Mark Levinson

ECONOMISTS AND SWEATSHOPS

"When smart people," Robert Lekachman once said, "say stupid things, the question arises, why is their perception of reality so blurred?" I recalled Lekachman's query when reading a recent *New York Times* article in which Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs claimed "there are too few sweatshops." And just in case anyone thought he was kidding, Paul Krugman from MIT added that "the overwhelming mainstream view among economists is that the growth of this kind of employment is tremendous good news for the world's poor."

Krugman elaborated on this argument in *Slate*:

> [Workers in poor countries] are, inevitably, paid very little and expected to endure terrible working conditions. I say "inevitably" because their employers are not in business for their (or their workers') health; they pay as little as possible, and that minimum is determined by the other opportunities available to workers. . . . And yet wherever the new export industries have grown, there has been measurable improvement in the lives of ordinary people. . . . [N]o matter how base the motives of those involved, the result has been to move hundreds of millions of people from abject poverty to something still awful but nonetheless significantly better. . . . [A]s long as you have no realistic alternative to industrialization based on low wages, to oppose it means that you are willing to deny desperately poor people the best chance they have of progress for the sake of what amounts to as aesthetic standard—that is, the fact that you don't like the idea of workers being paid a pittance to supply rich Westerners with fashion items.

In claiming that there are no alternatives to industrialization based on low wages, Krugman

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fails to make a crucial distinction. It is one thing (and legitimate) for a country to attract investment because it is poor and its wages are low. It is another thing entirely (and not legitimate) for the government of a country, acting in concert with multinational corporations, to suppress wages by violating internationally recognized worker rights.

By workers' rights I mean human rights that every woman and man should enjoy: the right to free speech, the right to freedom of association, and the right to organize and bargain collectively. These rights do not depend on a nation's level of economic development. There is no nation on earth so poor that it cannot afford free speech and freedom of association for its citizens.

The suppression of rights keeps workers poor and perpetuates sweatshops. Where workers don't have the right to bargain for their share of productivity increases, or to organize in the political arena for higher labor standards, there is little evidence that wages, or living standards, will naturally rise. Amartya Sen makes a similar point in arguing against the idea that authoritarian governments are more effective in promoting economic development:

> The governmental response to acute suffering often depends on the pressure that is put on it, and this is where the exercise of political rights (voting, criticizing, protesting, and so on) can make a real difference. . . . While this connection is clearest in the case of famine prevention, the positive role of political and civil rights applies to the prevention of economic and social disasters generally. . . . *To concentrate only on economic incentives (which the market system provides) while ignoring political incentives (which democratic systems provide) is to opt for a deeply unbalanced set of ground rules* [emphasis added].

It is not the case, as Krugman claims, that the growth of export industries will inevitably lead to higher living standards. Krugman cites the industrial development of East Asia, in which the assembly of garments and electronics for export "kicked off" the growth of modern industry. But the newly industrializing countries of Asia achieved economic growth with trade protection, state controls on capital, and manipulated exchange rates. Export-led growth fueled by cheap labor and deregulation can have very different results. In many Latin American countries the factories that produce for export to the United States generate few linkages with the local economy that might spur economic development. In the Dominican Republic, for example, the growth of export industries has been accompanied by an increase in unemployment and a sharp decline in wages (from 1977 to 1991 unemployment increased from 13.7 percent to 26.8 percent, while manufacturing wages fell by almost 50 percent). According to a recent report from the International Labor Organization (ILO) on the global textile, clothing and footwear industries, the Dominican Republic is not an exception:

> It might have been expected that the countries benefiting most from relocations in terms of employment would have posted significant earnings growth; although this was true in a few cases, it was not a general trend. . . . Bangladesh and Sri Lanka posted the highest percentage employment gains in clothing, but earnings fell in both cases.

In *Slate* Krugman explains, to those not burdened with a Ph.D. in economics, that however well-intentioned one's concern about exploited workers in poor countries, any attempt to do something about oppressive working conditions is fruitless, or worse, counterproductive:

> [T]he women and children in the sneaker factory are working at slave wages *for our benefit*—and this makes us feel unclean. And so there are self-righteous demands for international labor standards. . . . This sounds fair—but is it? Let's think through the consequences. . . . At best, forcing developing countries to adhere to *our* [emphasis added] labor standards would create a privileged labor aristocracy, leaving the poor majority no better off. . . . A policy of good jobs in principle, but no jobs in practice, might assuage our consciences, but it is no favor to its alleged beneficiaries.

First, who benefits from low wages? When American consumers pay $125 for Nike sneakers made by workers in Indonesia who earn 31 cents an hour, they may feel "unclean," but not because they are benefiting from cheap labor. Someone is benefiting, but it isn't American consumers.

Krugman also presents a caricature of the case

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for labor standards. His argument that labor standards would lead to "good jobs in theory and no jobs in practice" is based on the assumption that labor standards would be imposed on single countries. However, standards would not cause job flight if they were applied everywhere.

This does not mean that developing countries should adopt our standards. Each nation's standards must be appropriate to its level of economic development. For example, all countries should have a reasonable wage floor, not necessarily a uniform minimum wage. This would, of course, be very complicated. But complexity is no reason not to pursue standards.

The old debate—between isolationist and internationalist, protectionist and free trader—is over. The global economy is a reality. The question is: what are the rules? What are the boundaries placed on the market that will ensure that it works for working people?

We faced this challenge before, at the beginning of this century, when the great corporations and trusts forged a national market and escaped the regulation of states and localities. The market was eventually constrained by national rules—food and drug standards, antitrust regulation, fair labor standards, a ban on child labor, worker rights, social security, consumer and environmental standards. But these reforms did not come automatically. They required worker organizing, citizen movements, courageous leaders, and even an occasional economist willing to say that the status quo was not inevitable.

We now face the same challenge—only this time at a global level.

Allowing those who produce wealth to share in it is essential to creating a virtuous circle in which higher wages translate into more sales, new investment, and job growth. The most effective way to achieve that is to guarantee workers basic rights. The current treaties that regulate the global economy consist mainly of elaborately detailed protections for property, corporations, and capital. Future treaties must include protections for the rights of workers.

Would this eliminate sweatshops overnight? No. But it would be a step in the right direction, and as Amartya Sen argued, it would lead to a more balanced set of ground rules.

Where does that leave Krugman?

> That [his thought] reached conclusions quite different from what the ordinary uninstructed person would expect, added, I suppose, to its intellectual prestige. That its teaching, translated into practice, was austere and often unpalatable, lent it virtue . . . . That it could explain much social injustice and apparent cruelty as an inevitable incident in the scheme of progress, and the attempt to change such things as likely on the whole to do more harm than good, commended it to authority. That it afforded a measure of justification to the free activities of the individual capitalist, attracted to it the support of the dominant social force behind authority.* □

*Author's note: I apologize. In copying this passage from Keynes I thought he was writing about Krugman. He was in fact writing about David Ricardo.

Rosalind C. Barnett & Caryl Rivers

BASHING WORKING FAMILIES

The American media have declared war on the working family. A recent cover article in the *New York Times Magazine* featured an excerpt from Arlie Hochschild's new book *The Time Bind* that claimed that Americans want to spend more time at work than at home, because home is so stressful. Then *Newsweek* chimed in with a cover on "The Myth of Quality Time," the tag line of which read "How we're cheating our children." *U.S. News & World Report* bashed working families in a cover piece titled "The Lies Parents Tell about Work, Kids, Money, Day

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Care and Ambition."

Researchers who specialize in work-family issues were startled both by the volume of the attack and the lack of balance. Is the American middle-class family teetering on the edge of chaos? Not at all. Much research shows that working families are doing well. Our federally funded study of full-time-employed, two-earner couples found them to be in good health and reporting warm relationships with their children. Fathers are much more involved with their children than fathers in the past. A major federal study of infant day care found that such care poses no problems for the mother-child bond. Another study found that parents who both work outside the home were as "tuned in" to their children's lives as were families with one partner at home.

What's going on? We're witnessing another crack of the backlash. The subtext of these stories is easy to discern: working mothers are damaging their kids by working too much and using day care. The stories feature tales of woe of stressed-out parents. But one can find an equal number of tales of happy working parents, if one chooses to look. "Trend" stories are too often long on anecdote, short on context, and carefully tailored to fit the "bad news" cover line.

The "time bind" thesis is particularly popular in the media. Americans are finding home so stressful, and work such a friendly place, that parents are stretching out their work hours, cheating their kids in the process. It's a seductive thesis, but is it true? Arlie Hochschild interviewed people at one company, and says that for 20 percent of the 130 people she interviewed this pattern emerged strongly. She calls it "a trend in modern life destined to affect us all."

Wait a minute. Twenty-six people in one company add up to a national "trend"? Hochschild studied a company she calls "Americo" and criticizes employees for not taking flextime when it is offered. But is this company typical of the places where most of us work?

In the handbook given to every employee, the firm states that "face time" is the basis on which employees will be judged. "Work more hours," it states flatly. And employees at this company do work six hours longer per week than the national average. Company executives wondered why employees weren't using flextime. No big mystery there. When the corporate culture of a company screams "work more" in an era of downsizing, employees do. Did workers put in long hours because home was so stressful? It's more likely that they read the message from the top quite well.

Do most American workers reject flexible hours when they are offered? No. They grasp them eagerly. A study of six thousand employees at Du Pont found that instead of moving up the ladder, 50 percent of women and 45 percent of men either took some version of flexible hours or stayed in jobs that would give them time with their families. A study at Merck found much the same thing. Almost all major poll data show that people want to work fewer hours.

And when people don't take flextime, is it because they love work? Or is it because they are terrified that in a downsizing environment the pink slip hangs above their heads?

U.S. News presents a grim picture of day care, but it distorts the very positive findings of the massive federal study of infant day care—a forty-five million dollar study of fifteen hundred children at ten sites around the country. The only finding that the magazine mentions is that in cases where the mother-child relationship is already weak, placing an infant in poor quality day care can do harm. The story does not tell its readers that the major finding of the study was very optimistic: for the vast majority of mothers and children, infant day care does no damage to the mother-child bond. This is another example of media spin: even positive studies are presented so that the tiniest bit of bad news gets all the play.

U.S. News admits that high quality day care can boost a child's language and cognitive skills. But once again, the negative is emphasized—only "excellent" parents who send their kids to very good day care centers need relax. However, looking at research on day care, Smith College psychologist Fay Crosby reports that good parenting can overcome the problems of even average day care. Unfortunately, the whole thrust of the article is toward bashing working parents, not on getting more resources for day care.

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What's the truth about the working American family? No headlines greeted a study by a team of researchers at Pennsylvania State university who looked at parental monitoring of children. (Parental monitoring means the degree to which parents communicate with their children, display interest in their activities, and know about the child's whereabouts, plans, and activities: in short, how "tuned in" they are to their kids. It's a strong predictor of children's achievement.) The researchers studied 152 families in depth. The children involved were nine to twelve years of age. The families were fairly evenly divided between those with two parents working full time, those with one full-time and one part-time employee, and those with at-home mothers. Researchers found no difference in the levels of parental monitoring among the groups. The working couples were as tuned in to their children as those with one parent at home.

Other data are similar. Study after study shows no difference on any measure of child development between the children of working mothers and those of at-home mothers. And research does not present a picture of parents who want to work more hours—quite the opposite. In our study, most couples said they would prefer to work fewer hours. This study, a well-designed sample of typical middle-class couples—not fast-track, seventy-hour-a-week types—showed them to be satisfied with their lives and close to their children.

Is everything rosy? Of course not. Parents want more time for their families—all the data agree on that. And when companies offer "family friendly" policies with no penalties, both men and women take advantage of them. The problem is that too few companies offer such policies, and others send out the clear message that if you want to keep your job you'd better work long hours.

Blaming parents for being "selfish" is not the answer. Research shows that most working parents see the family as the center of their emotional lives. And people are not eager to spend all their time at work. In fact, younger workers especially do not invest all their loyalty in the company. Why should they? The grind is just as likely to get laid off in a major downsizing as the slacker at the next desk. Many more workers than in the past, particularly men, are choosing to carve out time for family. They've seen too many middle managers who had scant time for their kids and were still tossed out the door.

But if people believe Hochschild when she says people don't want flexible hours, why should companies bother? Her thesis could mean very bad news for families.

The real truth is that we need nationwide quality day care and widespread "family friendly" policies. Let's spend at least as much energy making things better for working families as we do on making them feel bad. □

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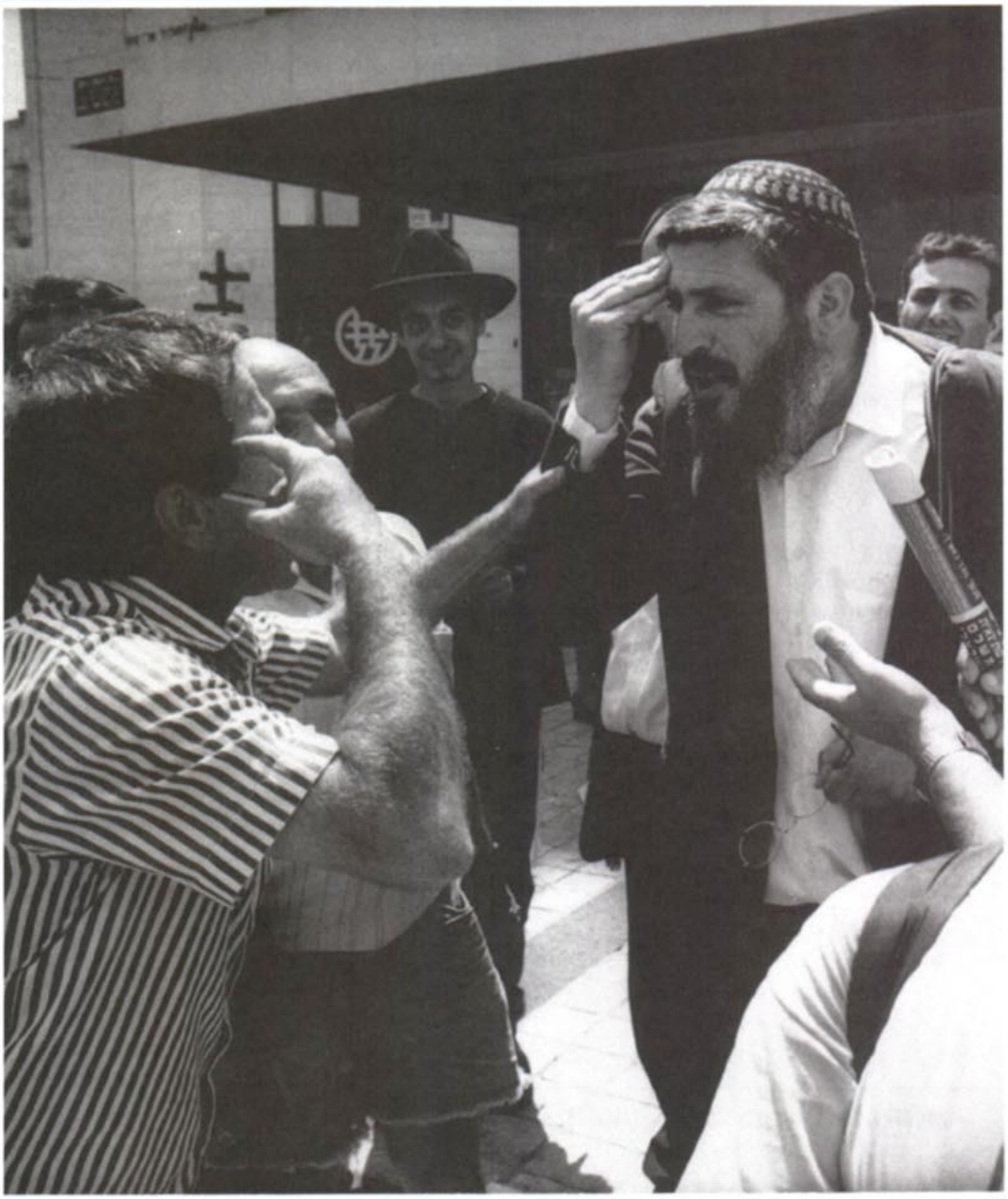

Labor and Likud supporters argue on the day before the May 1996 election. Teit Hornbak/IMPACT VISUALS

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Jonathan Frankel

NETANYAHU'S SECOND YEAR: FARCE AND TRAGEDY

JERUSALEM

In a well-known comment on Napoleon III, Karl Marx wrote that historical figures and events do indeed repeat themselves—"the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce." This witticism seems particularly apt here in Jerusalem, where we are now well over a year into the government of Binyamin Netanyahu, the would-be heir to Vladimir Jabotinsky. Farcical is the adjective that best describes the series of blunders ("unforced errors" in tennis terminology) committed by this man, whose every word and gesture signal supreme self-confidence, the will to command.

The trouble began immediately after Netanyahu's defeat of Shimon Peres in May 1996, when, as the first directly elected prime minister in Israeli history, he expected—much like an American president—to select his cabinet almost at will and without extensive consultation. The subsequent delays were initially put down to the fact that he was cannily "keeping his cards close to his chest," but in the end he was humiliated as key appointments were forced on him by coalition partners determined to call his "presidential" bluff. Then in September came his decision to open the northern exit of the Hasmonean tunnel that runs alongside the foundations of the Temple Mount and empties out into the heart of the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem's Old City. The subsequent Arab riots left dozens, both Palestinians and Israelis, dead, and caught the prime minister (who had been amply warned of the possible violent reaction) off guard while in the midst of his grand tour of the capitals of Western Europe.

But all this was as nothing compared to the Bar-on affair, which kept the country occupied throughout the first half of 1997. Once again the attempt to carry off a brilliant coup, stunning in its sheer temerity, rebounded, all but bringing down the government. The appointment of a party hack as attorney general (in itself contrary to the letter of the law) and then the discovery that an ex-minister on trial for fraud (and hoping for lenient treatment) had had a hand in selecting the candidate, almost resulted in criminal charges against Netanyahu. Only a hair's breadth stood between the prime minister and an indictment—a Watergate case that had its Deep Throat, but no tapes. The plot to subvert the rule of law thus backfired: the attorney general who replaced Bar-on (in office for a mere three days) is well qualified, a man of integrity; and a government-appointed committee, chaired by a retired president of the Supreme Court, is drawing up recommendations on how to prevent any such scandalous nominations to this post in the future.

The moment the Supreme Court ruled in June that there was insufficient evidence for an indictment, Netanyahu decided to reimpose his authority by yet another bold and decisive move. He forced the resignation of the Minister of Finance, Dan Meridor, a key figure in the prime minister's Likud Party and a potential rival for leadership. What was meant to have been a neat surgical operation became a three-week crisis, as one coalition party after another threatened to bring down the government unless its demands for more financial support or political influence were met—and met they were, at least on paper, and at a potential cost of something like one billion unbudgeted dollars.

To all this has to be added the long list of

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disgruntled heads of state around the world, from Bill Clinton down, who have conducted what appeared to be successful meetings with Netanyahu only to find that promises made and assurances given were rendered meaningless by subsequent inaction or counter-action. One by one, doors that were wide open are closing in his face.

A record of this kind, without precedent in Israeli history, has exposed Netanyahu to a barrage of criticism, likewise unprecedented, not only from the media (all the major newspapers; the radio stations; and the television channels, both public and private), but also from every political camp: left, right, and center, the Likud no less than the Labor opposition. Many of the attacks come in satirical form, sometimes involving the prime minister's wife, Sarah, who against all political traditions in this country insists on appearing at his side, often with their small children, on official occasions, both at home and abroad: a would-be "First Lady" to match our presidential prime minister. When her publicity-seeking, sometimes accompanied by violent outbreaks of temper, attracts adverse comment, Netanyahu criticizes the media, declaring that surely one thing has to remain sacrosanct: the privacy of his family.

What follows is a small selection from the comments and jibes that nowadays fill much of the press.

From Yoel Marcus of *Ha'aretz*:

> Leading the procession of those who are expected "to surprise us" [by some positive new start], is Bibi who with every new failure wins credit by promising that we will yet be surprised. True, there is not a soul left who believes a word he says. But surprise us he will: one fine day we'll wake up and find that the Arabs have surprised us!

Or here is Sylvie Keshet of *Yediot Aharonot*:

> Bibi's the crime; and Sarah's the punishment, and the more we know about the punishment, the better we understand the crime, and vice versa. . . . But she's no longer content to be a constant thorn in the prime-minister's side; she wants to be Sarita.

Doron Rosenblum, another well-known *Ha'aretz* correspondent:

> If there's any recurring comic interlude in the chilling . . . political culture initiated by Binyamin Netanyahu, it is the way that after every new affair . . . he declares in a firm voice that it is time to put aside all such trivia "in order that at last we can get the wagon moving!" . . . —so, time and again, declares the man who cuts Oslo down to size, freezes the peace process, puts an end to prosperity at home and to economic opportunity abroad . . . systematically halts any initiative and all progress on every front. . . . So ringing is the call to begin to move forward that nobody asks: "And where are we meant to go? To what end? And in what direction?"

And here is Yisrael Harel, a central figure in the ultranationalist settler movement, Gush Emunim, attacking his own party for remaining in the government coalition.

> Whoever claims that there is no alternative to Bibi is saying in effect that he is reconciling himself not only to his astounding weakness as a politician but also, and above all, to the moral and political corruption that the regime has brought down on us.

How can a man who was such an astounding success in first taking control of the Likud Party and then in conquering power—all within the space of a few years—prove so incompetent once in office? The answer would seem to be that precisely those traits of character that made possible his meteoric rise have also been the cause of his subsequent failures. To illustrate this point, it is enough, perhaps, to listen to Netanyahu talking about himself (the words come from an interview published late last year):

> In complete contradiction to what is said against me, and in contrast to other leaders, I am not somebody lacking a sense of direction; I am no weather vane. With me, the aim and the goal are totally clear. I know where I want to go. And in that case, when you have a map and a compass and a good sense of orientation it's easier for you. You orient yourself, choose a clear route and note various detours in advance so that if you run into difficulties you can cut off to the right or to the left and so keep moving to your predetermined destination. Anybody who has ever had to deal with the problems of orienteering has to understand that. If you know where you're headed, everything is much simpler. That's how it is with me, despite all that's written in the papers.

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This choice of metaphor should be seen, I believe, as symptomatic; for route-finding is a lonely activity pitting the individual against nature. And in his race for office, Netanyahu indeed acted very much as if in an orienteering contest, joining the competition for party leadership with his own team, his own fund-raising campaign (primarily centered in the United States), and his own strategy. He provided crucial support (aberrant in his own Likud Party) for the law initiating the direct election of the prime minister; and he exploited the new primary system to the full, reaching over the heads of the party leaders to the mass membership below, presenting himself effectively as the only person with a chance to snatch power back from Labor. He won the elections in much the same way, making minimal use of the party and maximal use of television, ably assisted by Arthur Finkelstein, who was brought in from the United States to advise him on the art of "negative advertising."

Very different skills, though, are required to run a highly fractious coalition government; lead a democratic, but divided, country; and conduct an effective foreign policy under the most complex circumstances. Here, the ability to anticipate how others will react to your every move is obviously crucial. The relevant model is not the lone route-finder, but the chess player who has to pay as much respect to his opponent's plans as to his own, readjust his tactics accordingly, and combine flexibility with determination. Netanyahu finds it hard, perhaps impossible, to internalize this obvious fact. He executes some brilliant gambit, sits back, and expects the rival player to declare himself check-mated. There are, doubtless, many reasons for this pattern of behavior: an almost total lack of experience in actual government (he had been a student, junior army officer, a furniture salesman, a diplomat, and, briefly, deputy foreign minister); a family that indoctrinated him in childhood and youth with Revisionist doctrines of intransigence as the height of wisdom (Jabotinsky's famous theory of "the iron wall"); and a temperament unusually egocentric, with suggestions of paranoia.

His long train of mishaps stems from his determination to concentrate control over all key areas of policy (economic, foreign, military, and judicial) in his own office, staffed by his personal appointees, who are even more inexperienced than he and, worse, of mediocre caliber. (Netanyahu is sometimes compared to Ronald Reagan, another vote-catcher not obviously qualified for the top job, but Reagan had the sense to surround himself with people of proven experience.)

Within not much over a year the prime minister has reached a situation where three members of the government, two ministers and one deputy minister, have resigned and regularly denounce him; where many of the remaining ministers declare publicly that he is not to be trusted; where he is on the worst of terms with the army command and intelligence chiefs (they insist on providing him with prognoses that he would rather not hear); where he is at war with the media, who see him as a potential threat to free speech; and where he has cut himself off from regular dialogue with the neighboring Arab rulers (Arafat, Mubarak, Hussein) as well as from the leaders of the Western world.

How, then, is all this going to end? On the face of things, of course, it would seem that Netanyahu is heading for a mighty fall. That may well be, but is not necessarily, the case. There are, in fact, no fewer than three possible, albeit very different, scenarios.

The first runs, with various permutations, along the following lines. After all, Netanyahu has overcome every crisis—a political Houdini able to slip out of any trap. Paradoxically, it could well be that the more he blunders, the better his chances of survival. His dependence on every faction in the government, and their consequent ability to blackmail him, are now so great that it is against their interests, at least in the narrow party sense, to see him fall. The minister of defense, Yitzhak Mordechai, and the minister of foreign affairs, David Levy, have (doubtless to Netanyahu's chagrin) become particularly indispensable and therefore powerful. Either of them, not to speak of both, could bring the government down tomorrow without undue personal

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risk: Levy will be needed in any coalition government, whether headed by Labor or Likud; and Mordechai is riding a huge wave of individual popularity. But they might prefer their present situation.

Once firmly allied, these two ministers could impose a peace policy on the government, forcing Netanyahu even against his natural instincts onto that path of reluctant compromise trodden in the past by other hardliners (de Gaulle vis-à-vis Algeria; Nixon vis-à-vis China). Viewed from this perspective, the most significant episode of Netanyahu's premiership has not been any one of the many blunders, nor even his fateful decision to launch the Har Homah construction project on the southern outskirts of Jerusalem, but rather the agreement that he reached with Arafat to hand over most of Hebron to the Palestinian Authority. If the most nationalistic government in Israeli history could withdraw from the city of Abraham, from the very heartland of the patrimonial territory, and survive nearly intact (only one minister, Benjamin Zeev Begin, resigned), then, so the argument goes, it can survive almost anything.

After all, what choice remains, in the last resort, to the extreme right-wing of the coalition: the National Religious Party, the Tsomet Party of Rafael Eytan, and the hardliners in the Likud? If they act to defeat the government and elections are held, the new leader of the Labor Party, Ehud Barak, could well emerge as prime minister. Alternatively, if pushed to the wall, Netanyahu might choose to bring the Likud, or at least its rump, together with Labor into a national-unity government pledged to keep the peace process somehow alive. Seen in this light, the more moderate coalition partners (Levy and his Gesher Party; Shas, the religious party representing much of the "North African" community; the small Third Way Party; and sections of Natan Sharansky's "Russian" immigrant party) have the whip hand.

Counted among the most prominent advocates of this optimistic line are the president of the country, Ezer Weizman, and the leader of the Shas Party, Aryeh Deri, who even while on trial for various economic crimes, still commands respect as a political analyst. Interviewed for *Ha'aretz* in July, Deri maintained that only Netanyahu's right-wing government can command the broad public support required to reach a final status agreement with the Palestinians. A Labor-led coalition could never muster the strength to undertake so terribly divisive an enterprise. "I told abu-Mazen," reported Deri, "that for all the difficulties, [the Palestinians] have an interest in reaching an accord with Netanyahu. Only he can push through difficult concessions and achieve an agreement that will hold up for many years."

For all that, though, a second scenario is still considered the more plausible by many observers. In their view, the days of this government are numbered and the only question is how soon it is going to fall. The reasoning here is very simple. From the first, the government has been riven by a profound internal contradiction. On the one hand, the election campaign was waged on a platform promising "a secure peace" (and, however reluctantly, recognition of the Oslo accords); but on the other hand, key parties and politicians in the coalition saw the defeat of Peres as the popular rejection of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement and as a mandate to freeze the peace process. It would require a leader of exceptional skill and subtlety to ensure that a house so divided could be kept standing, and there is precious little in Netanyahu's record to suggest that he is such a man. Rather than build the partnerships essential for success (whether with his cabinet colleagues or the Palestinian leadership), he prefers to dictate and bully, thus turning potential friends into fierce enemies.

Major difficulties await the government in the near future. The second redeployment envisaged in Oslo-2 has to be completed before the end of the year; and this time, word has it that Israel's peace partners (the Palestinians, the United States, and Egypt) expect a very large part of area "C" to be transferred to Arab rule. (In the first redeployment, Israel offered 2 percent!) Beyond that, the budget for 1998 has to be settled, pitting the cost-cutters of the Milton Friedman school against high-spending "populists" such as David Levy. The skeptics expect the government to founder on one or another such issue, with elections coming some time in 1998. As one analyst

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put it recently, Netanyahu has proved that he has exceptional ability as a tightrope walker, but "he would be well advised not to look down from the heights of his success—the number of those waiting for him [to fall] keeps growing all the time."

According to the opinion polls, if elections were held today, Ehud Barak would come out the winner, with a lead over Netanyahu of 10 percent to 15 percent. But if the Likud were to be led by Yitzhak Mordechai, as becomes more probable by the day, the result would be very different. In such a clash of ex-generals, Mordechai comes out ahead by a few percentage points.

But there is a third and much darker analysis of the direction in which we are heading. In this reading of things, the real Netanyahu is specifically the man who chose to open the tunnel and to start construction on Har Homah, thus putting the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations into a deep freeze for many months. These were not random actions, nor thoughtless responses to pressure, but a deliberate attempt to put an end to the peace process at the lowest possible cost. What better way to sabotage the Oslo accords than to choose Jerusalem as the site of the confrontations, thus provoking maximal rage on the Palestinian side and rallying the greatest possible support from Israelis and from world Jewry? In reality (according to this argument), Netanyahu belongs with the hardliners in his government. And as for the partial withdrawal from Hebron and the endless talk of breakthroughs in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, they have to be seen as no more than smokescreens.

The rhetoric of peace serves a triple purpose: it gives expression to the sentiments of most Israelis; it goes some way, at least temporarily, toward mitigating Israel's increasing isolation in the world; and, above all, it provides the moderate wing of the coalition, supposedly committed to a policy of peace, with a justification for remaining comfortably in office, rather than risking the unknown of new elections.

If the result of the stalemate in the peace process is to undercut the standing of Arafat and to bolster the strength of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, then that is simply part of the net bonus. Extremism on one side feeds extremism on the other; fundamentalists share a common interest in each other's success. Nothing could suite the radical right better, so goes this analysis, than to return Israel to a state of siege, with nobody but its sworn enemies to speak for the Palestinians.

Netanyahu has never made it a secret that he has ambitions not only to perpetuate but to deepen the "counterrevolution" set in motion by Menachem Begin in 1977. It was Begin's achievement to rally the peripheries against the center; the outsiders and the alienated against the order of things associated with forty years of dominance by the Labor movement. That order was felt by its critics to be excessively secular; nationalist certainly, but also too universalist and Western; harsh, but also unnecessarily humanist. Begin was brought to power by an electoral alliance of the religious parties, the Oriental Jews (in large part), and much of the middle class; and it is this alliance that has kept Labor out of power for fourteen of the last twenty years.

Netanyahu, though, believes that this dramatic reversal by no means went far enough. The time has come, he insists, for a major attack on the elites, who, by and large, remain committed to a belief in the possibility of "land for peace" and genuine compromise with the Palestinians. What is more, he is anxious to transform the right-wing coalition from a loose alliance of parties into a bloc united by common values under his leadership, and this looks increasingly possible as the ultra-Orthodox become more chauvinistic and the secular nationalists absorb religious—exclusivist—attitudes into their Jewish identity. From a slogan, "the national camp" could become a solid political fact.

It cannot be said that the prime minister has as yet made much progress on these two fronts. So far the civil service, military, professional, and academic elites have fought hard, often courageously, to maintain their integrity and uphold the standards of a democratic system. But this struggle will become harder the longer

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Netanyahu stays in office, especially if the country finds itself isolated, threatened by—or even involved in—war (and war with Syria is a possibility that cannot be discounted). In the resulting atmosphere of paranoia and hatred, he will be able to make maximal use of his one undoubted political gift: the demagogic ability to place the blame for every problem or mishap on his opponents, be it the left or the Palestinians. According to the pessimists, then, Netanyahu has an excellent chance to remain in office until the end of his term in the year 2000, confident that—with the support of close to 50 percent of the population, of the pro-Israeli lobby in America and of the U.S. Congress—he can put an end to Oslo. He could even be reelected, on that basis, to a second term.

I do not venture to say which of these three scenarios is the most likely to become reality. But it would, of course, be bitterly appropriate if the man who orchestrated the vicious campaign of incitement against Yitzhak Rabin in 1994-1995 should also be the man to preside over the destruction of his peace project. It may not be so; pessimists, after all, have no monopoly on foresight. But the gods of history are often cruelly unforgiving. Labor had its chance to shape the future along positive lines after the Six Day War, in the years 1967-1973. It failed utterly in that task. Twenty years later Rabin, the architect of victory in 1967, together with Peres, made a truly heroic effort to correct the fateful misjudgments made under the leadership of Levi Eshkol and Golda Meir (with their own, albeit more junior, participation). That attempt, one of the great moments in the history of this country, was cut short by an assassin's gun. It is too early to assess the full significance of these extraordinary developments. What can be said, however, is that the farce that follows in the wake of tragic drama can itself be transformed into yet another tragedy. □

Maurice Isserman

ROLL OVER, KRUPSKAYA

American Consumerism in the New Russia

Moscow's mayor Yury Luzhkov decreed this past spring that the city's retail outlets would no longer be able to call themselves by such western-inspired names as "supermarket," "drug store," or "shop." As of June 1, businesses in the city were required to abandon English language or Anglicized names in Cyrillic script for more traditional Russian versions; thus supermarkets will become *gastronom*, or in the case of larger establishments, *torgovy dom*. (When I left Moscow in mid-May, few businesses seemed to have responded to the new requirements, no doubt reasoning that a well-placed bribe or two would ward off over-zealous official enforcement.)

Luzhkov's defense of Russian linguistic purity is clearly doomed, unless the mayor can think of some way to impose similar restrictions on the city's graffitti. Consider three samples to be found in the elevator that creakily serviced the fourteen-story Brezhnev-era apartment house where I lived. All were in Latin script—and in English. The first read "Kurt Cobain," the second, "Born to Lose," and the third "Die Nigger, die!"

It's not hard to imagine the combination of

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adolescent angst, schoolboy nihilism, and uncritical admiration for all things American that inspired the writings. What makes the third example stand out, apart from its offensiveness, is that there were no black residents in our building or in the immediate neighborhood. Russians have their own well-established ethnic prejudices: against Jews, Chechens, Gypsies, Uzbeks, and even their fellow Slavs from Ukraine. But blacks have never been found in large enough numbers to qualify as a despised minority. Still, I imagine some young Russians reasoning that if "nigger" is a good enough epithet for surly American teenagers to use, it's good enough for them.

For young Russians, Americanized English is decidedly cool; to be able to speak it, or simply know it well enough to record its tag phrases and insults on the wall, betokens personal stylishness, desirability, independence, toughness. American marketing logos are the common currency of conspicuous consumption in the New Russia. One of the first sights greeting new arrivals driving in from Sheremetevo II, Moscow's international airport, is a three-story-tall representation of the "Marlboro Man," advertising his wares in English with a self-confidence long-since missing in the United States. Another brand of cigarettes locally marketed is the unambiguously named "West"—"Test the West" the advertising billboards proclaim, in English. In the streetcorner newspaper kiosks one can purchase the latest editions of *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, and *Cosmopolitan* magazines, while in the videocassette stalls Demi Moore peeps in demure sexuality over her artfully arranged knees from the cover of dubbed copies of *Striptease*.

In those perhaps-soon-to-be-renamed supermarkets, shelves are lined with American brands of breakfast cereals, instant coffee, and disposable diapers. It's instructive to watch the shopping carts being unloaded at the cash register; the contents provide a generally reliable guide to national identity. Foreign customers fill their carts with the kinds of spices, dry goods, dairy products, and fresh produce still scarce or unavailable in local markets; "New Russian" customers, winners in the local struggle for what Karl Marx (in reference to eighteenth-century Britain) described as "primitive capitalist accumulation," are more likely to purchase exorbitantly priced tokens of westernized affluence, such as Sara Lee frozen cakes.

The consumer bounty of the new market economy, along with its imported iconography, coexists uneasily alongside the surviving symbols of the previous regime. Unlike eastern Europe and many of the non-Russian Soviet republics, where the events of 1989-1991 brought in their wake the rapid de-Leninization of public spaces, in postcommunist Russia no one (not even the image-conscious Mayor Luzhkov) seems to be in any particular rush to do the same. Every morning my seven-year-old daughter, Ruth, and I boarded the trolley on Leninsky Prospekt to ride the five stops to her elementary school. We got off at Ulitza Krupskaya, a street named for Lenin's wife. There is a little park at the intersection of the two streets containing a bronze statue of Lenin and Krupskaya seated side by side in apparent domestic bliss. ("What is to be done?" I imagine the placid-looking Lenin affectionately asking his mate. "Well, dear, if you aren't too busy, could you put some more water in the samovar?")

The dowdiness of such Soviet-era relics is their salvation—at least temporarily. Any sudden attempt to topple Grandpa and Grandma Lenin from their pedestal would likely be regarded—at least by the older generation—as pointless desecration. For younger Russians, in contrast, communism stands discredited not only by its historical record of political repression and economic mismanagement, but because the revolutionary images associated with it have become, by a perverse twist of historical irony, those of the status quo. On May 1, I came across a group of Russian teenagers wearing in-line skates and practicing their jump shots by tossing a basketball into Lenin and Krupskaya's laps.

We in the United States may welcome any sign of expanding "western" influence among this first post-Soviet generation of Russians. We have always thought of ourselves as a "City on a Hill," a nation whose political institutions and social order were by providential design an inspiration to less fortunate lands. But it is worth considering how selective our influence has been thus far in the reshaping of Russian

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society. We are almost exclusively exporting images of private gain and material satisfactions rather than collective bonds and democratic responsibilities. It is the Marlboro Man, not Martin Luther King, Jr., who speaks to young Russians as the best the West has to offer. As the old Simon and Garfunkel song put it, "The words of the prophets are written on the subway walls and tenement halls." It's time to pay attention to the handwriting on the elevator wall. We may succeed in playing a prophetic role in shaping the Russia of the twenty-first century—and then not find ourselves very happy with the results. □

Aliza Marcus

UNEASY PROGRESS IN CYPRUS?

Every Saturday morning, as tourists at the Greek Cypriot checkpoint walk past coils of barbed wire into the Turkish-Cypriot–controlled sector of Cyprus, Rita Mantoles is out pleading for help. On a small placard are the testimonies of her grief: faded black-and-white photos of her husband, father, uncle, and three other relatives arrested twenty-three years ago by Turkish soldiers who invaded the island a few days after a coup by Greek Cypriots bent on union with Greece.

"I believe that one day the Turkish troops will leave and I will be able to go back to my house," says Mantoles, who comes from a village now out of reach, across the United Nations-patrolled buffer zone that cuts the island in two and separates Turkish and Greek Cypriots. "I am sure my husband is still alive, and for me, there can be no justice, no freedom, until everything can be the way it was that day in July, when I last saw him."

And that, some say, is precisely the problem. Mantoles dreams of her house, but it's now filled with Turkish Cypriots. She clings to the picture of her husband, but it's widely accepted that both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot "missing" from the years of intercommunal violence are dead. It's tragic, but true.

There's a lot of denial in Cyprus, a small Mediterranean island that became independent from Britain in 1960. Greek Cypriots cling to an idealized version of the past, in which Greek and Turkish Cypriots worked side by side and danced at each others' weddings. Turkish Cypriots remember only the strife that broke out in 1963 when Greek Cypriots tried to change the Constitution that had sought to maintain a balance of power. Both sides say they want to set up a bizonal federation, but over the years they have taken turns scuttling talks. At the root of the problem is the fact that they cannot agree on what went wrong when they did live together.

Take for example the events of the summer of 1974. Turkish troops invaded—or did they? Turkey says the forces were sent to protect Turkish Cypriots in the aftermath of the Athens-sponsored coup that toppled the Cypriot government. Greek Cypriots say Turkey was exercising its longstanding expansionist plans. Whatever the truth, Turkish troops never did get around to leaving. Today, thirty thousand Turkish troops are the backbone of the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, recognized only by Turkey.

Further back it gets even more complicated. The intercommunal violence between 1963 and 1967 forced Turkish Cypriots to withdraw into enclaves. Hundreds of them were killed, and the United Nations was called in to patrol. Even today Greek Cypriots refuse to acknowledge responsibility. They talk about a "few unfortunate incidents" or blame it all on the Turkish Cypriots. This attitude does not inspire trust among Turkish Cypriots, who fear a renewal of fighting if they are forced to live side by side with Greek Cypriots.

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But efforts to reunite the island continue. The latest one began this summer just outside New York City with talks between the leaders of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. The men did not exactly come willingly. Nor are they saying much different than they were three years ago, when the last round of talks collapsed. The meeting was forced due to a spurt of international interest in this island of some eight hundred thousand people. The negotiations are sponsored by the United Nations, but even the United States has made its interest clear, appointing former Bosnia mediator Richard Holbrooke as special envoy for the Cyprus problem.

What sparked the sudden attention? It wasn't the Cypriots themselves. Greek and Turkish Cypriot soldiers glare at each other across the buffer zone, but the past twenty-three years have been remarkably peaceful.

No, what was going on outside Cyprus got people thinking. Next year Cyprus (read the Greek Cypriots) starts ascension talks with the European Union (EU). If the EU lets in half an island, Greek Cypriots will take this as a sign that they do not have to compromise with the Turkish Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots will interpret this as a slap in the face and may follow up on threats to merge with Turkey. So the chance of a settlement between the two sides will evaporate.

Then there is the threat of war between NATO allies Greece and Turkey, each of which has a defense pact with its respective community on the island. According to the military accords, an attack by Turkey south of the buffer zone should mean Greek military planes respond by strafing Turkish soldiers. It would be only a matter of time before the Aegean Sea—where Ankara and Athens have disputed claims on islands, mineral rights, and territorial waters—became a battlefield.

Such a scenario is not new, but Greek Cypriots managed to remind everyone of it earlier this year when they announced the purchase of Russian anti-aircraft missiles. Claiming the missiles could hit Turkey, Ankara promised to attack if they were deployed as scheduled in 1998. Greek Cypriot president Glafcos Clerides held firm, but indicated the purchase would be delayed or canceled if there was movement on settlement of the division of Cyprus. The decision to buy the missiles boosted his local popularity while the hint of a delay in deployment gave the international community time to scramble for new ideas. The only thing it could come up with was to get the two sides talking again.

What are the odds of an agreement this time around? Not very good, say Western diplomats. They go back and forth on whom to blame. Despite the rhetoric, Greek Cypriots have softened their demands. The government won't say it publicly, but it understands that not all the 160,000 people displaced in 1974 (about a third of the Greek Cypriot population of the time) will go home. They have also accepted that Turkish Cypriots will govern their own zone. Still, there is a real worry that when Greek Cypriots are faced with the reality of never going home again, a deal could be scuttled.

In the north, the problem is that the Turkish Cypriot administration really would prefer to be an independent state. Since nobody but Turkey supports this, the Turkish Cypriots have been forced to consider how much they can get through negotiations. Long-time Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktas wants his "sovereignty" recognized before he agrees to a federation. In essence, he wants north Cyprus acknowledged as an independent state, and then he is willing to talk about a federation. But what's to stop him from just holding on to independence once it's recognized? Meanwhile, the population in north Cyprus is growing—and the Turkish Cypriot population is dropping. The last census came up with two hundred thousand people. Somewhat less than half are thought to be Turks from the mainland. Turkish Cypriots, fed up with the bad economy and the lack of opportunities (it is a small state under a virtual embargo with an unwieldy public sector), emigrate in droves to Britain. There is a real feeling of despair in the north.

Some people ask, Why not just accept two separate states? As sovereign powers they likely would ease restrictions on freedom of movement. For the sake of economic growth the north would probably allow some Greek Cypriot businesses

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to take root. Maybe some houses would trade hands. Greek and Turkish Cypriots could get to know each other again after the twenty-three-year hiatus. After some time they might realize it was better to formally link up rather than run two states on such a small piece of land. With the proper international controls coupled with demilitarization, the threat of Greece or Turkey using the island as a munitions storage center would be small.

In some ways it makes the most sense, but Greek Cypriots are far from accepting this. Brought up to believe they were always the victims—a Cyprus university professor says it was not until he was a twenty-nine-year-old student in the United States that he learned that Turkish Cypriots had been killed in the 1960s—they see the problem as simply one of military occupation. What they fail to realize is that in the north, Turkish Cypriots see the troops as their protectors. And to give the Greek Cypriots their due, they see no reason to write off a third of the island because of past mistakes on their part or that of Athens and Ankara.

The question now is whether Turkey will decide that a deal on Cyprus is advantageous. The Cyprus problem hinders Ankara's aspirations to join the European Union. Turkey might be willing to trade Cyprus for a settlement of questions relating to the Aegean Sea and a clear path to EU membership. In 1959, Turkey and Greece negotiated the independence of Cyprus and then presented it to the people on the island. This time around, Cypriots get a say at the outset, but if there is a deal to be made, Athens and Ankara will have the final word. One can only hope they will be more successful than they were the last time. □

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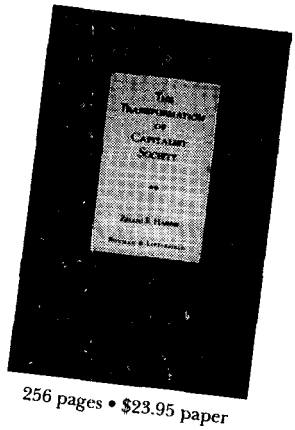

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Harold Meyerson

CAN LIBERALISM SURVIVE CLINTON?

The Crisis of the "New" Center

This should be the New Democratic moment. Clinton II began with the banishing of liberals, their places filled by wall-to-wall New Dems: for Leon Panetta, Erskine Bowles; for George Stephanopoulos, Rahm Emanuel; for Robert Reich (in his domestic policy maven role), Bruce Reed. A few months later, the British election results suggested that New Democracy could have global reach, that it might even evolve into a latter-day ism. Moreover, it wasn't as if anyone else was advancing a program. Chastened Republicans were still reeling from the backlash against their shutdown of government; chastened liberals were still woozy from their failure to enact any significant progressive legislation during Clinton's first two years. With both right and left in retreat, a hush fell over the political stage. The New Dem solo seemed about to commence.

And a minimalist solo it's turned out to be. The first half-year of Clinton II has come and gone, and his New Democratic administration has come up with few if any notable initiatives. To be sure, the hardy perennials of the center-right agenda either have moved through Congress (the balanced budget deal) or are waiting in the wings (the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] extension, the scaling back of universal benefits). But unlike the welfare decimation of 1996, none of these can claim a particularly New Dem pedigree. Of the more distinctly New Dem progeny, most are holdovers from the 1996 campaign (jiggling the tax code to make college more affordable) or almost entirely symbolic (recommending that the states submit their primary and secondary students to national testing) or both. But that rush of ideas we associate with Democratic administrations in their first six months has been strikingly absent from Clinton's second term.

Clinton himself is said to be frustrated with the paucity of policy. It's one reason why he's bringing two non-New Dems, consultant Paul Begala and commentator Sid Blumenthal, into the White House—though whether this means he thinks his agenda is insubstantial or just not being sold very well remains to be seen. More remarkably, some fairly new arrivals to high White House positions already want out (and not, as in Bowles's case, just for personal reasons). Better, they've apparently concluded, to be at the margins of something than the center of nothing.

The void of proposals highlights the limitations of New Democracy as an ideology. Up to now, New Democrats have largely defined themselves by what they're not—not big spenders, not high taxers, not pro-unionists, not environmentalists, not supporters of universal programs or of a higher minimum wage. Now they have the peculiar misfortune to come fully to power at a moment when hardly anyone is floating the kinds of policies they shoot down. They have succeeded too well: absent the Old Dem initiatives, the New Dems have nothing to say. Clinton has given his administration over to a tendency comfortable chiefly in opposition.

And yet, for all that, the New Dems are in better shape than any other ideological grouping on the American scene. Republicans have backed off their agenda of 1995, and the ideas they do sporadically promote—tax cuts for the wealthiest 1 percent, holding up flood relief to ensure that the next census doesn't create too

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many Democratic districts—seem chosen with an eye to pushing Newt's negatives into the nineties.

For their part, liberals see limited political space for promoting governmental solutions to social ills. Their *raison d'être* is often no longer even to mount a rearguard defense of eroding governmental programs, but just to mitigate the catastrophes that arise when those programs get axed (for example, fixing the welfare bill). Their prospects are even bleaker on the state and local levels. Governors' mansions are likely to remain preponderantly in Republican hands after the 1998 elections, and, as the fate of mayoral candidates Tom Hayden and (so far) Ruth Messinger illustrates, the urban liberal coalition has collapsed into brain-dead, parochial, squabbling camps. America's highest-rolling liberal PAC (outside of labor), the Hollywood Women's Political Committee, has disbanded, not just disgusted at the fund-raising process, but frustrated at its increasing inability to identify minimally progressive candidates. And, for aficianados of the Democrats' decades-long identity crisis, the first Silicon Valley PAC was formed this summer, a bipartisan group whose Democratic co-chair, venture capitalist and Al Gore confidant John Doerr, is a registered Republican.

The Tricky Politics of the Uneven Boom

A particular frustration for liberals in general and House Democratic leader Dick Gephardt in particular is their continuing inability to exploit the issue of stagnating wages and rising inequality. Part of the problem—but only a small part—stems from their understandable ambivalence, as David Corn has noted in the *Nation*, toward the grotesquely imbalanced Clinton prosperity. For Democrats, the boom is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, they gladly take credit for low unemployment; on the other, the decline in unemployment is largely a function of the stagnation of living standards that they wish to decry.

For, according to one recent Department of Labor comparative study of national economies, the U.S. economy enjoyed no edge in productivity rates over other industrialized nations from 1990 to 1995. Indeed, our productivity increase lagged behind those of Germany, Japan, and France. Our very real advantage was in unit labor costs, which rose just 1.4 percent annually over this period, while Germany and Japan experienced yearly increases of 5.9 percent and 10.9 percent, respectively. In the two years since that study, U.S. wage rates have finally risen a little, but unit labor costs, which factor in benefits, still have gone nowhere. By cutting back on employee benefits and enrolling their workers in health maintenance organizations that repeatedly reduced health care standards in order to raise profits, American business realized savings unavailable to their foreign competitors. These actions left liberal Democrats pondering how to assess a prosperity based on the very economic changes their supporters fear most.

Well, some of their supporters. For Democratic pols, one problem of an uneven boom is that it benefits their donor base while hurting their voter base. If we look, for instance, at California Department of Finance figures on personal income from 1995 to 1996, we find that wage income increased by a scant 3 percent, while dividend income rose by 10.7 percent, rent income by 11.5 percent, and business proprietor income by 10.7 percent. Unlike the great postwar prosperity, this is a rising tide that forces Democrats to make some very uncomfortable choices—and none more uncomfortable than the proposed extension of NAFTA (which so discomfits the Clinton administration that it's been loath to bring it to the Hill).

Unlike other aspects of the uneven boom, where policy options are seldom crystallized, the question of global trade is one on which the public takes unambiguous positions. A question on a *Wall Street Journal* poll from late June as to whether globalization of the economy was a good or bad development—by a margin of 48 percent to 42 percent, people thought it bad—revealed a fairly extreme, if predictable, class polarization. College graduates thought it good by 58 percent to 30 percent; respondents with no more than a high school diploma judged it bad by 59 percent to 33 percent. The professional/managerial class supported globalization 55 percent to 35 percent; blue-collar workers opposed it 57 percent to 36 percent. Alignments like these are a leading indicator of Democratic

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divisions—or dithering.

With House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt having failed to persuade his colleagues to stand and fight the GOP's tax cuts, liberals will get just one more crack at the inequality issue this year: the fight over the NAFTA extension, which will be waged as much within their own party as without. But liberals also confront a more fundamental and paralyzing problem than either the Democrats' divisions or their own ambivalence about the economic boom-stagnation. On the central question of our time—how to recreate a widely shared prosperity—the globalization of business and the contraction and discrediting of both government and the organized working class leave them, even the most doctrinally pure among them, with few plausible policy options. Really significant legislative remedies—laws that strengthen unions or that establish trade pacts premised on international Keynesianism—require a shift in the political climate that is nowhere in the winds.

The paucity of public-policy remedies also places a terrific burden on the new, improved, Sweeneyized labor movement. Virtually by default, it becomes the only sector of society doing battle with the tide of inequality. In America of 1997, as Vince Lombardi might put it, labor isn't everything; it's the only thing. As if labor didn't have enough to worry about.

As the State Withers

The budget and tax plan that came out of Washington this summer was a mish-mash of Republican principles and Democratic particulars. Democrats won a significant expansion of health coverage for hitherto uninsured children and tax credits for college students and families with children under eighteen. They were able to restore disability benefits, though not food stamps, for legal immigrants.

For their part, Republicans won massive tax breaks for wealthy taxpayers, who make most of their money through investments, as if America's most urgent need, with the Dow breaking 8,000, was to persuade the rich to invest. Never mind that the notion that reducing capital gains taxes will spur the economy is entirely, as they say, faith-based. The last time the capital gains tax was cut, in the Great Reagan Giveaway of 1981, it was followed in the next year by the deepest recession since the thirties. Conversely, Clinton's 1993 tax hike on the rich (which is not the same as a capital gains hike, but which certainly affects the same people) has been followed by a record four-year rise in the Dow. But the belief system of supply-siders, like that of the Taliban warriors, is perfect and complete and can withstand any assaults of vulgar empiricism.

Gephardt urged Clinton to veto the Republican tax proposals, which all polling showed to be politically insupportable. The very idea, though, was anathema to the White House bipartisans, and by including kiddie-care in the package, they were able to win at least half the liberals on Capitol Hill to their position. Further flaws in the budget—the major cuts it mandates in as-yet-unspecified domestic programs in the years 2001 and 2002, and its elevation of budget balance over social need in the hierarchy of American public purposes—were apparently too distant or abstract to dampen support from many liberals, and weren't flaws at all in the calculus of the New Democrats.

Meanwhile, a more fundamental assault on government, and on the social compact, looms on the horizon: an attack on universal entitlement programs. The New Dems have no exclusive franchise here: the financial community, the deficit hawks, and their Gen-X front groups all got there first. But the New Dems in and out of the administration have brought a distinct, if far-fetched, analysis of their own to the case against entitlements. Despite all the polling that showed voters rallying to Clinton in 1996 both because he acknowledged the era of big government was over *and* because he defended Medicare and other popular programs, the New Dems have a revisionist spin: the public actually supports checking the growth of those pesky entitlements. Conducting a postelection poll for the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), White House pollster Mark Penn went so far as to cook up a question—Would you support entitlement reform or pay more taxes to keep Medicare as is?—that fairly bludgeoned respondents into the reformers' column.

The DLC has had a curious evolution.

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Founded (by Gephardt, among others) in the mid-eighties with the mission of bringing the Democrats back to more centrist and politically sustainable positions on social issues like crime, the council, greatly abetted by former DLC chair Clinton, largely succeeded in its initial task. It then took on a new mission: prodding the Democrats to embrace such politically unsustainable positions on economic issues as supporting free trade, opposing minimum wage hikes, and calling for cutbacks in Medicare. Once the defender of Main Street on cultural questions, it has become the defender of Wall Street on economic ones.

Now, entitlement programs do face a demographic challenge: over the next third of a century, the number of seniors will double, from thirty-four million today to sixty-eight million in 2030. A few minor modifications is all it will take to keep Social Security solvent. Medicare is trickier, because the problem isn't only demographic, but also a function of our uniquely hit-and-miss health care system.

The Senate put the entitlement debate on fast-forward this June by passing three provocative Medicare modifications that were killed in conference committee but will be resurrected soon enough. The first—charging seniors five dollars for every home-health care visit—will surely keep poorer seniors from getting treatment they need, and probably lacks sufficient support to be ultimately enacted. But the other two proposals, raising the age of eligibility from sixty-five to sixty-seven, and raising the premiums of the wealthiest 4 percent of recipients, present liberals with a more considerable challenge.

This last proposal in particular asks liberals to choose between two of their longstanding and hitherto noncontradictory values: universality and progressivity. On its face, there is nothing preposterous about asking the wealthiest to shore up a system facing substantial financial difficulties. Indeed, Lionel Jospin suggested a similar policy change in presenting his program to the French Parliament. And if the American welfare state were as stable and popular as the French, this wouldn't be the problematic proposal that it is.

But precisely because the American welfare state is so spotty in its coverage, almost any attempt at modification has the potential of leading to a general leveling downward. In applauding the Senate's audacity, the *Wall Street Journal*'s Gerald Seib wondered how we could justify having the health insurance of a $70,000-a-year retiree paid for by a worker making eight bucks an hour with no benefits at all. But if the $8 worker with no coverage is our benchmark for equity, how can we justify his paying for a $20,000-a-year retiree? A $10,000 retiree? It's the exclusion of the worker—not the largesse allegedly lavished on the seniors—that destabilizes the system. Introducing steeply progressive premiums to pay for rising costs is commendable—right up to the point where it jeopardizes Medicare's base of support. And the only way to ensure that it won't is to make health care universal.

A similar slippery slope is apparent in the Senate's other proposal, to increase the age of eligibility from sixty-five to sixty-seven. The first problem—how do sixty-five- and sixty-six-year-olds get coverage?—is partly addressed by Bob Kerrey's suggestion that they be allowed to receive partial benefits at age sixty-two—or younger. But what is to stop an employer from dropping his coverage entirely, and letting workers eligible for this partial coverage get it from the state? When he introduced his universal health care plan in 1993, President Clinton rightly insisted that partial solutions do not work. This is no less true today.

Another popular partial solution in Congress these days, enacted in this summer's budget, is to extend health coverage to uninsured children through block grants to the states. One could, of course, simply extend health coverage to uninsured children as we do to seniors and Medicaid recipients, but that would reek of the old entitlement ethos and damage the recipients' moral fiber. (Like little kids everywhere, they'd hang around doctors' offices, clamoring for shots.) Instead, we will appropriate twenty-four billion dollars to the states to purchase health insurance for anywhere from two to five million of the almost ten million uninsured children. Why the moral character of the states is thought to be less corruptible than the moral

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character of children is a mystery best left to the Republicans and New Dem congresspeople who insisted on this form of program.

Kiddie-care is a genuine achievement, but it will be several years before anyone knows how much of one. Like last year's Kennedy-Kassebaum health care bill, which gave the newly unemployed the right to maintain their coverage if they could just keep up their payments, it brings us to the era of post-entitlement entitlements. This may well be the best that liberals can do within the current political climate, but it creates the unsettling possibility that the American welfare state will turn into a tease.

What's a Liberal To Do?

The crisis of liberalism today is that within the limits imposed by the budget-balance mania, and the markets, and the Republican control of Congress, and the mobilization of business, and the demobilization of almost everyone else, Kennedy-Kassebaum may well be the wave of the future. Gephardt has steadfastly opposed the return of laissez-faire, whether through trade deals or welfare cuts, but he has thus far lacked the votes to derail many such initiatives. Just by threatening to make an issue of it, he was able to kill the proposed wholesale revision of the Consumer Price Index to satisfy the budget cutters, but that was the rare exception. He remains the most buttoned-down of populist tribunes—but in its current state, populism is in no position to quibble.

The legislator who's seen more liberal opportunities and took 'em over the past couple years has been Edward Kennedy. The Senate's senior liberal has realized that the voters' aversion to general tax hikes and expanded government coexists alongside their desire to mitigate the plight of the worthy—that is, working—poor. His success in getting the minimum-wage hike enacted, and putting kiddie-care on the nation's agenda, suggest one way to attack inequality in a time of balanced-budget lunacy. So does the success of municipal living wage campaigns for city-contract workers in a growing number of communities. A *Los Angeles Times* poll found 70 percent support for the L.A. ordinance, enacted this spring over the opposition of the city's business community and Republican mayor, though no media campaign had been waged on its behalf. A greater emphasis on state-level legislation that rewards work—living-wage laws for state-contract workers, adding Earned Income Tax Cut provisions to state income taxes—is certainly a strategy the left should consider. Making a priority of rewarding work can also lay some of the groundwork for a renewed effort to re-legalize union organizing the next time Congress is not under the control of New-Age Herbert Spencers. (The administration briefly entertained a kind of back-door labor law reform earlier this year, when it proposed making employees' right to join a union a criterion for awarding federal contracts, but they withdrew the offer as the price for getting Alexis Herman's confirmation as secretary of labor through the Senate. Gephardt may raise the idea this fall—but with no expectation of quick results.)

It's small comfort if any, but American liberals are hardly alone in their confusion and drift. It's not that libs lack the trappings of power: with the Liberals governing Canada, and social-democratic parties ruling alone or in coalition in thirteen of the fifteen member nations of the European Union, parties of the center-left have seldom been more dominant. Indeed, you could reasonably conclude that these parties of the left have become the natural party of government for this age of frenetic globalization, downward leveling, and erosion of the social compact—their mandate derived from the plaintive wail of voters everywhere to make it a less wrenching time.

But it is a tricky and unenviable task for the left to have to govern in a time of rightward drift—and govern in large part *because* it is a time of rightward drift. No body of doctrine or experience offers any guidance here. Is Tony Blair's assessment of the limits of the possible—putting a smiley face on Thatcherism—not just chastened but correct? Is Jospin bound to fail at his attempt to preserve statism in one country? Can the left create a "social Europe," as Jospin demands, absent a political Europe—a legitimate, demo-

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cratic, transnational government—to enact those social reforms?

What's confounded American liberalism and European social democracy is that the very realm of the political has shrunk. The welfare of the poor, the upkeep of the infrastructure, the health of the populace—these are increasingly the province of the market now; no political solutions need apply. The center-left parties in many nations will cling to office—who in today's world wants parties that accelerate capital mobility?—but genuine power will elude them until politics and government become as transnational as the economy. The fight to include genuine labor and environmental standards in an expanded NAFTA is a good way to begin. The construction of a supranational civil society—of unions and parties that flow across borders—must move from the status of ethereal vision to a practical program, with unions and parties dedicating resources to developing transnational institutions. Locked into national governments that can no more than shadow-box with global capital, American liberals and their European counterparts face a future of rearguard incrementalism. That may suit the New Democrats fine, but the left has a different set of promises to keep. □

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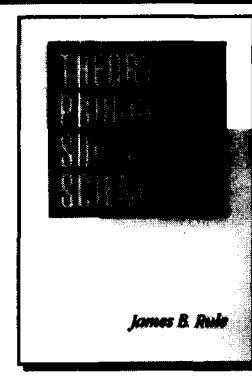

This work attacks questions that have long troubled social scientists — questions of the cumulative nature of social inquiry. Does the knowledge generated by the study of social, political, and economic life grow more comprehensive over time? Do today's social scientists in any meaningful sense know more than their intellectual ancestors about such perennial concerns as the origins of war and peace, or the causes of economic growth, or the forces shaping social stratification, or origins of civil upheaval? These questions go to the heart of social scientists' soul-searching as to whether they are indeed engaged in "science."

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Linda K. Kerber

THE MEANINGS OF CITIZENSHIP

Attracted by the appeal of living in the United States as a comfortable member of the community and driven by threats to make legal residency an insecure status, the number of immigrants who have been turning themselves into U.S. citizens has quintupled in the last five years.

The languor with which so many immigrants seemed to approach the formalities of citizenship until threatened by the loss of Supplemental Social Security Income and food stamps would have surprised, even stunned, the generation of Americans who came to maturity during the 1930s, when floods of refugees from Nazi Germany challenged democracies to decide whom they would accept as fellow citizens. At the end of the cold war we again find ourselves in a time of extraordinary political fluidity. Is national citizenship, a concept invented in the era of the American and French revolutions, sufficiently resilient in the contemporary world?

All over the globe individuals' rights as citizens are being recast. The status of citizen, which in stable times we tend to imagine as permanent and fixed, has become contested and variable. Fluidity can mean advantage: travelers holding the burgundy-colored European passport whisk through checkpoints; students in the European Union's Erasmus Project now wander across Europe as they pursue university degrees. We hear voices announcing that national citizenship will be a thing of the past; it's multinational citizenship that we need.

But many elements of destabilized citizenship remain problematic. Ask the members of the U.S. Congress who voted for the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act how they have reconstructed the distinction between citizens and legal immigrants. Or better yet, ask the citizen spouse of a legal immigrant. Ask the citizens of California who voted for Proposition 187, which would deny public education and nonemergency health care to children of undocumented immigrants. Ask the citizens of Hong Kong.

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Citizens and Others

Modern citizenship was created as part of the new political order courageously constructed in the era of the American revolution. Reaching back to the Greeks and reinventing what they found, the founding generation produced a new and reciprocal relationship between state and citizen. They permitted no formal categories of first- and second-class, or of active and passive, citizens.

Borders and immigrants were rarely far from the minds of the founding generation. Situated as they were on the fringes of an expansive empire, the original constructors of American citizenship understood the state in a global context. The Boston Tea Party, after all, was set off by the recalibration of English trade with India. Among the "long train of abuses" catalogued against George III in the Declaration of Independence was the complaint that he had obstructed the laws for naturalization of foreigners and failed "to encourage their migration hither."

Most people who become citizens do so by being born on American soil; they claim *jus soli*, the common-law right of the land. Others, born in other parts of the globe to parents who are American citizens, claim citizenship by descent. And U.S. citizenship can also be had by naturalization. The citizenship acquired in each of

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these three ways is essentially the same.

"Citizen" is an equalizing word. It carries with it the activism of Aristotle's definition—one who rules and is ruled in turn. We describe rights and obligations in egalitarian language and generic terms: all citizens pledge allegiance to the flag, using a capacious rhetoric that ignores differences of gender, race and ethnicity, and class. At its founding, the United States government assumed that any free person who had not fled with the British or explicitly denounced the patriots was a citizen. It radically disconnected religion and political participation: Congress may make no religious test.

But the founding generation left few explicit definitions of what it meant by citizenship. The federal Constitution says little more than, "The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States." The text takes for granted that we know what these "privileges and immunities" are. One rare example of what everyone "knew" can be found in an opinion written by Supreme Court Justice Bushrod Washington in 1823 in which he described what he understood to be the common sense of the "privileges and immunities" that all citizens share. His vision was expansive and made no distinctions among citizens:

> Protection by the government; the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the right to acquire and possess property of every kind, and to pursue and obtain happiness and safety . . . to claim the . . . writ of habeas corpus; to institute and maintain actions of any kind in the courts of the state . . . .

After the Civil War, the Fourteenth Amendment expanded the concept of national citizenship. Defining all persons "born or naturalized in the United States" as citizens of the United States and of the state in which they reside, and guaranteeing them the "equal protection of the laws," the Fourteenth Amendment was intended not only to break the linkage of citizens and white people made in the infamous *Dred Scott* decision of 1857, but also, in promising that "all persons" are entitled to equal protection of the law, to break the equally chilling linkage of basic rights to citizens rather than people generally. This idea—that the United States is a nation in which basic values are available to all persons within the landscape—endured as the major principle of American life.

The principle was tested in 1886 at a time when all Chinese were excluded from citizenship. A San Francisco city health ordinance required that laundries in wooden buildings be licensed. All Chinese laundries in the city were in wooden buildings; all were denied licenses. (Virtually all laundries in wooden buildings owned by whites received licenses.) Yick Wo, a laundryman, refused to pay what he believed to be a discriminatory fine, challenging the courts to consider the tensions between the "privileges and immunities" that citizens may claim and the "equal protection of the laws," in which aliens as well as citizens participate. The Supreme Court unanimously ruled in his favor, holding that "aliens within the United States—*including those who are unlawfully present* [my italics] are persons entitled to constitutional protection . . . the equal protection of the laws is a pledge of the protection of equal laws."

The decision in *Yick Wo* was not a chance event. Repeatedly the Supreme Court has sustained the right of even undocumented aliens to due process—and also their right to bring suits in the courts of the United States. In some states and territories before World War I, aliens were encouraged to vote even before they became citizens. Other practices eased the transition to citizenship. Until deep into the twentieth century, foreign women who married American citizens automatically became citizens themselves; they did not even have to take an oath of allegiance. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 eliminated racial barriers to immigration. In 1982 the Supreme Court struck down a state attempt to deny free public education to children of undocumented immigrants.

But this practice of capacious definition has periodically been challenged. A 1907 statute—not fully reversed until the mid-thirties—provided that when an American-born woman married a foreign man, she lost her citizenship. The exclusion of aliens from the United States on grounds of their race or their politics was a key to immigration and naturalization law for more than forty years, from the early 1920s to 1965. This pattern was strengthened by long periods

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of absolute exclusion of Asians and by the definition of ethnic and racial intermarriage as miscegenation. During the McCarthy era, suspicion of aliens was embedded in the McCarran Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952.

Suspicion is again on the rise, as virtually every poll on the subject shows. California voters passed Proposition 187. Recent welfare legislation substantially denies benefits to legal immigrants as well as to undocumented ones, although some members of Congress, among them New York Senator Alfonse D'Amato, seem to be reconsidering their support for this legislation. Last year the Republican Party, forgetting its own sponsorship of the Fourteenth Amendment, proposed to eviscerate it by denying citizenship to children born in the United States whose parents are undocumented aliens.

Decline of Civic Engagement

In this atmosphere, we risk losing connection with the tradition that basic values are available to all persons in the landscape and that the distinguishing mark of citizens is active engagement in civic life. Sixty percent of the eligible U.S. public does not vote. In 1994, 65 percent of eligible voters told pollsters that "public officials don't care much what people like me think." In 1993 less than 13 percent of the public described "themselves as belonging to groups involved in any way in politics." How can those figures be explained?

Many persuasive reasons are offered. David Thelen (*Becoming Citizens in the Age of Television*, 1996) has pointed to the thousands of thoughtful letters constituents wrote to members of Congress during the Iran/*contra* hearings as evidence of their resentment of the management of opinion by spin doctors, pollsters, and advertisers. Robert D. Putnam ("Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy*, 1995) and others have pointed to developments that undermine the building of social trust: among them the all-volunteer army and the fragility of public schools, which decrease the likelihood of cross-class encounters and friendships; or slum clearance projects that bulldoze closely knitted neighborhoods; or gated communities and private athletic clubs that pull upper classes out of contact with the middle classes.

To these I would add the squandering of public trust in all agencies of government that accompanied the Vietnam War and from which we have not yet recovered. Congress specifically authorized each of the phases of the war—but accompanied everything it did by what the constitutional lawyer John Hart Ely, in *War and Responsibility*, has called "studied ambiguity." From the time that President Lyndon Johnson gave Senator William Fulbright "assurances . . . that the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was not going to be used for anything other than the Tonkin Gulf incident itself," to the very last days of the withdrawal from Saigon when the U.S. Ambassador gave repeated assurances of sanctuary to Vietnamese people whose lives were at risk because they had worked for the United States and then left them behind, everyone was given extensive lessons in distrust, in the frustrations and dangers of activism, in the weakness of the promises of citizenship. Congress staged an apparent debate over the Gulf War in January 1991, but by the time of the debate, Ely reminds us, "the President had massed over 400,000 troops in the area—the same order of magnitude as Vietnam at its peak. . . . There was no doubt that there was going to be a war." The Vietnam War, wrote Russell Baker, "turned us into a people who know we can't believe anybody anymore, including ourselves."

We spent an enormous amount of social capital and social trust in the years 1965-1973, and we have not yet restored it. Many of the questions raised today about the multiple meanings of citizenship, particularly of civic obligation, and of what we owe to a government that misuses our trust, were first raised in the context of the Vietnam War.

"[I]f the citizen is a passive figure," Michael Walzer observed some years ago (*Obligations*, 1970), "there is no political community. The truth, however, is that there is a political community within which many citizens live like aliens. They 'enjoy' the common liberty and seek no further enjoyment." All too many American citizens now live like aliens in their own land—passive, sour, anxious, suspicious of civic engagement. It may be that so many of us resent aliens because we are so much like them.

Do we need citizenship? We are embedded

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in postnational and transnational relationships that may be changing the meaning of citizenship beyond recognition. In *Modernity at Large* (1996), the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai suggests that the United States is in transition from being "a land of immigrants" to being "one node in a postnational network of diasporas." Our world is flooded with refugees. Appadurai points to "refugee camps, refugee bureaucracies . . . refugee-oriented transnational philanthropies [that] constitute one part of the *permanent* framework of the emergent, postnational order."

In such a world international human rights take on overwhelming significance. For increasing numbers of us, writes Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal (*Limits of Citizenship*, 1994), they have replaced national rights: "the rights and claims of individuals are legitimated by ideologies grounded in a transnational community, through international codes, conventions, and laws on human rights, independent of their citizenship in a nation state." In such a world, Appadurai reminds us, individuals need multiple memberships: "Chinese from Hong Kong buying real estate in Vancouver; Haitians in Miami, Tamils in Sri Lanka, Moroccans in France"—citizens of one country, legal permanent residents of another; dual citizenships. Nations themselves are embedded in postnational relationships, notably in Western Europe, where citizenship in one EU state brings rights in all the others.

The United States, writes Appadurai, "always in its self-perception a land of immigrants, finds itself awash in these global diasporas, no longer a closed space for the melting pot to work its magic, but yet another diasporic switching point, to which people come to seek their fortunes but are no longer content to leave their homelands behind." A taxi driver from Zaire explained to me recently that although he was grateful for many opportunities, he had not become a citizen, unable to overcome his deep resentment of U.S. complicity in the destabilizations that accompanied the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961 and forced his family to flee. A woman from Guatemala told a National Public Radio reporter last year that taking the oath of citizenship meant for her simultaneously a commitment to the United States, where she had lived for decades, and the wistful abandonment of a dream that someday she would run for office in a democratic and stable Guatemala. These people look on the Statue of Liberty with a decidedly bifocal gaze.

Human Rights

International conventions that ascribe universal rights to persons challenge nation-states not to make distinctions in granting civil, social, and even political rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) unequivocally asserts that "all beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. . . ."

What elements of citizenship are needed in this postnational world, where there are plenty of universal declarations of rights but precious few instruments to enforce them? Individuals need multiple memberships, but they also need reciprocal ones. Whether in a transnational setting or a national one, a citizenship defined only by entitlement is not resilient; it does not sustain vibrant communities in which people understand that justice will be done. In a postnational world we will need more, not fewer, expanded, not narrower, networks of civic engagement. We will need much greater investment in networks of civic engagement that build social trust and allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved. If there are answers to my question, they will not be found in modes of citizenship so passive that a citizen can easily be mistaken for an alien.

We already have some powerful experiments in the building of trust and engagement in a transnational world. Thousands of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) flourish, harnessing civic energies in transnational contexts. We have seen within the last five years a successful campaign—energized, alas, by horrors in Bosnia-Herzegovina—to declare rape a war crime and to expand the boundaries of human rights to include women's right to be protected against violence. In recent months we have seen a promising campaign to set boundaries to the extent of exploitation of workers by multinational corporations.

But transnational civic life remains embryonic, even in its most developed formations, as in the European Union and the European Court of Justice or the United Nations itself. Citizens

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of European member states may move from one state to another, but must rely on their home state for social security and other social provision; they may not become a burden to their host. The National Consumers League has hardly made a dent in the exploitation of factory workers in a global context. And when Fauziya Kasinga fled genital mutilation in Togo last year, it was to the United States' practice of asylum that she appealed—with, after much delay and anguish, success—not to a court of international human rights.

Long ago Hannah Arendt stressed that our inheritance from the era of the American and French revolutions is simultaneously an expanded understanding of the "Rights of Man" and a tight linkage of human rights to national identities. That link is more elastic than it was, but it remains in place. What Arendt wrote about the impact of World War I retains its appropriateness as a description of Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s and 1980s and of Rwandan refugees today: "Once they had left their homeland they remained homeless, once they had left their state they became stateless; once they had been deprived of their human rights they were rightless. . . ." (*The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 1951) The next time you are boarding an international flight, watch the difference between the experience of people with passports and people with international "travel documents." The basic international distinction remains the experience of ease or anxiety at the checkpoint.

Local Citizenship

Last winter I visited Vietnam. I moved through the country cautiously, troubled by much of what I saw, and although people were gracious and never once made me feel as though their recent history were my personal fault, I dragged my younger self with me, aware that in that place America had stood for misery and violence.

And then, toward the end of my visit, I found myself in an English language college classroom. As we planned, the teacher offered only an open-ended introduction: here is Professor Kerber from America; practice your English, ask her questions, anything you like.

There was a silence, and then a young man rose and said, "Would you tell us, please, about freedom of the press?"

Well, what did they want to know? And it turned out that—in a country in which the state controls all television and radio stations (CNN and other international channels are fed only into hotels catering to international travelers, the homes of foreign diplomats and residents, and senior party and government officials), in which virtually all publications are censored, and tourists buy the *International Herald Tribune* for the price of a day's wages for a worker—what the students wanted to know were the details of how press freedom worked. Yes, in the United States people with enormous amounts of money might buy a newspaper or a television station to disseminate their views. But I could go to the copy shop (plenty of them in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City) and copy my statement and sell it on the street corner for a nickel, or I could give it away free. No censor would read it in advance. No one would say it was safe or not safe to distribute. And then I found myself saying that all this didn't just happen; that freedom of the press had to be enacted through engaged civic work, that there was a history to these principles. And without planning I launched into the *Zenger* case and wound my way through *Schenck* and *Abrams* into the Pentagon Papers until I stopped midsentence, startled at the multiple ironies of lecturing on the Pentagon Papers to a transfixed audience in what had been Saigon.

So citizenship means what we make it mean, and its transnational possibilities are grounded in national practice. The meanings of citizenship are expansive, and the need to understand citizenship in its historical context is as great as it has been at any time in American history. It is in citizenship that the personal and political come together, because citizenship is about how individuals make and remake the state, and it is through this making and remaking that we will sustain the ideals of the democratic revolutions, the rights that Bushrod Washington thought were the common sense of the matter nearly two centuries ago: the right to life and liberty, the right to pursue and obtain happiness and safety, the right to travel freely, and the right confidently to expect that justice will be done. □

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Todd Gitlin

ORGANIZING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

Beyond Identity Politics

The politics of group interest has had many worthy successes. Identity politics delivers a lot of psychological, legal, and practical goods. So, after a full generation, it has become a sort of tradition. Still, even its defenders concede that there have been costs as well—that an imbalance has developed between the politics of group assertion and the politics of commonality. But the sweet politics of commonality—what might it look like? What kind of action follows from the desire to overcome the limits of the politics of difference? How may we speak of transcending identity politics—not in the sense of obliterating differences, but in the sense of tempering them with action in behalf of the common good?

Oppressed and disadvantaged minorities win victories when they persuade majorities. American history is replete with times when minorities have submerged their particular claims in broader coalitions, only to be forgotten—and this is always a risk. But equally, it is much too easy to lose sight of the opposite risk of narrowness, and of the gains that minorities have won when broad-based movements—in particular, labor—have been strongest. The question is how to knit majorities into alliances where people know that they need each other—even when their interests are different, even at times antagonistic. Not to try creating the ground for progressive policies is to be doomed to marginality. But is there any reason to think that this ground might exist? Under what circumstances?

There is no magic bullet. But surely common ground can be found across race lines on class issues—or better, common ground can be *made*. It has to be created by organizers who are aware of the urgency of forging cross-identity links, committed to the difficult work of overcoming group rancor and forming alliances, flexible in their methods, mutually supportive and willing to learn from mistakes. There are precedents. Perhaps I can best approach the question of how to transcend the divisiveness of identity politics with a recollection of some modest successes of the past. The story may offer a clue—not a formula for surmounting present-day dilemmas, but a way to think about how to proceed.

In 1966, I was working as a community organizer in the Uptown area of Chicago, an impoverished neighborhood on the north side where unemployment and crime were high, housing decrepit, and many people on welfare. The vast majority of the residents were white, many of them recent arrivals from the Appalachian South, some from elsewhere in the South. Many were racist and not shy about saying so. The community organization, JOIN ("Jobs or Income Now"), had been started by Students for a Democratic Society through its Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP), a national attempt to organize what we immodestly hoped might turn out to be "an interracial movement of the poor." There were about a dozen more or less full-time organizers in Uptown, in loose association with another dozen each in both white and black neighborhoods in Cleveland, Newark, Baltimore, Boston, and at various times, smaller numbers in Philadelphia and Chester, Pennsylvania; Hoboken, New Jersey; Cairo, Illinois; Louisville and Hazard, Kentucky; and Oakland, California.

ERAP sprang from a perception of the black movement's dilemma. By 1963, it was clear that civil rights activists were in the process of winning their original demand to abolish legalized

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segregation. And then what? The movement was going to suffer from success. From then on, the central social problems affecting African-Americans were going to be economic. In the motto of the time: what good was the right to sit at a lunch counter if you couldn't afford the price of the hamburger? The great August 1963 march was, after all, called the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom—the word "jobs" came first.

One of the first, if not *the* first, New Left activists to propose organizing the white poor into alliance with the black poor was Stokely Carmichael, a rising star in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). At a 1963 meeting with SDS leader Tom Hayden, Carmichael proposed the formula "Whites should organize whites"—which begged the difficult question, Organize around what? In the meantime, before the enunciation of Black Power (by the same Stokely Carmichael) in 1966, it was still possible for white organizers to live and organize in black communities; Hayden and others went on to do just that in the heart of the Newark ghetto.

The governing assumption was that the needs of blacks required radical changes in the economy, but where was the political support for such changes to come from? There were, of course, liberals who (so we thought) could be counted on—in the churches, unions, and liberal city and state Democratic organizations. But the engine of the necessary coalition would have to be the poor themselves—and since a majority of the poor, then as now, were white, the white poor would have to join with the black poor around common concerns.

In SDS, we were not naive about the racism of poor whites. The struggle against the Klan-ridden, fire-bombing, cross-burning, murderous white South was formative to our sense of ourselves. Many of us had worked for civil rights in the heart of the South, and organized support campaigns for the courageous SNCC workers. We knew that the Populist alliances of the 1890s had been wrecked because, when push came to shove, whites had turned on blacks. We knew something of the history of Bourbon Southern elites tossing poor whites a subordinate caste to despise—"You've got more than the blacks, don't complain," in the words of Bob Dylan, who caught this mentality well in his song "Only a Pawn in Their Game."

The Uptown JOIN organizers, most of whom had experience in the civil rights movement, constantly worried about how to respond to white racism and insularity. We took two approaches. One was to bring Uptown whites and blacks from outside the neighborhood into contact at the earliest stages of organizing, so that the notion of a common struggle might take form. At JOIN's inception in 1964, the plan was to link our office on the (largely white) north side with a unit on the (largely black) south side, funded by the United Packinghouse Workers and with a black union staffer. That office, however, got nowhere. Twice we brought together white and black community people at national meetings, in order to conduct common discussions across race lines; these were inspirational, though occasional. The JOIN organizers had frequent contacts with Southern Christian Leadership Conference staff who had been sent to Chicago as an advance party preparatory to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s open housing campaign. Some of the more committed Uptown community people, along with organizers from black community organizations elsewhere in the city, came along to these gatherings. Race relations were reasonably cooperative.

During the summer of 1966, some of our staff, led by Rennie Davis and Bob Lawson, were trying to organize young white men. They were pretty tough, these "young guys," as we called them—hard drinkers, few with regular jobs, the toughest of them (and the one with the biggest following, it seemed) in and out of jail. Since their most deeply felt grievance was police brutality, that was the issue on which the organizers worked. Copying a tactic that had been used in Watts, we organized a community patrol, driving around behind police cars around on weekend nights, with cameras and notepads at the ready. Eventually, we decided to organize a march on the local police station calling for an end to police brutality and demanding the punishment of one particularly menacing cop. At the same time, similar campaigns were being mounted in other parts of the city—on the part of organizations that were almost exclusively

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African American. In the course of this campaign, the organizers took the Uptown street leaders to meetings with their black equivalents.

We discovered something simple: When the Uptown whites felt they were making progress, they stopped race-baiting black allies. They were suddenly willing to enter into coalitions. By the same token, when the campaign against police brutality produced no results, and it looked as though there was no payoff for keeping the coalition together, race-baiting returned, along with other varieties of grumbling, bitterness, and gloom.

The second approach required racial integration from the start, in the heart of the organization. This dynamic developed with welfare organizing. Women in Uptown, like others around the city, began to organize for increased allotments (in 1966, Illinois allotted twenty-two cents per child per meal) and against punitive rules. In the JOIN welfare group, two of the most active and talented women were black. Their centrality to the welfare rights group threw white women into a quandary. If they were to insist on expressing bigoted attitudes, they would have to forgo working in the organization. If, on the other hand, they worked with these black women, they might see some results. It was too soon for them to see material rewards—that would take time. But by working in an active, sensible, productive interracial group, they felt momentum—the sense that they were on the move, that cooperation and the direct expression of solidarity had serious prospects. This coalition held together for years. So did equivalent groups in Cleveland, ERAP's other main attempt at organizing poor whites.

In one case, cross-racial coalition from without; in the other, cross-racial coalition from within. The second lasted longer, though there was more than one reason for that—the welfare mothers were a steadier, more stable group than men in their teens and early twenties. In both cases, the concrete results were subject to all the limits of sixties organizing in general. The point is that, in both cases, the whites who were organized into coalitions with blacks were not supposed to be interested in or capable of doing that at all. A few steadfastly antiracist organizers countered conventional wisdom. On the issues of police brutality and welfare reform, the concrete results were certainly no worse for cross-race coalitions than for all-black organizations. Arguably they were better.

These were tiny experiments by a handful of organizers. What are the implications for today? What more might be possible with a coherent application of energy and care by a new generation of union and community organizers? If anything, the lessons of cross-racial organizing might apply better to labor today than in the sixties. Workplaces today are racially more diverse than neighborhoods; this implies that multiracial organizing is more likely to succeed on the job than elsewhere. Even where a work force (and therefore a union local) is relatively homogeneous, union representatives from various locals have to work out forms of cooperation in order to win beyond the local level. In this sense, labor is probably the most fruitful area in which to test the potential of a politics beyond segmented identity.

Meanwhile, labor should be pressed to support the just demands of identity groups, to put the spirit of movement back in the labor movement, to renew labor's claim to bearing the people's whole interest in mind. Campaigns to raise the minimum wage, and to require localities to pay living wages, set a good precedent; but labor needs to campaign for affordable housing, health care, and child care as well. Labor has the difficult but not impossible task of siding with the excluded while it is also the voice of the half-included.

My appeal to those who have turned to identity as the core of their practical politics is twofold: first, to consider whether diminishing returns have set in, and second, to consider whether their projects presuppose the existence of broad-gauged coalitions that are in fact vulnerable and in need of tending. In truth, we know very little about what might be achieved by moving beyond the politics of identity. What we do know, after a generation of experience on the left, are the self-limitations of identity politics, and the existence of untested possibilities. □

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Harry C. Boyte and Nancy N. Kari

COMMONWEALTH DEMOCRACY

[I]n a larger sense, we cannot . . . consecrate . . . this ground. The brave men . . . who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. . . .

It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced . . . that this nation . . . shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg, November 19, 1863

Lincoln's famous call to take up "the unfinished work" of those who fought for the Union drew its power from the way he redefined consecrate. He shifted the meaning of the word from public ceremony enacted by officials to the public work that ordinary soldiers did on behalf of the nation. He simultaneously honored Union soldiers and reminded the country that democracy was an unfinished labor of all the living.

Abraham Lincoln had long held to a labor theory of value. He saw work as prior to capital, as the source of wealth. In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln tied his view of labor to a broadened view of democracy that enlisted ordinary citizens—"government of the people, by the people, for the people." This formulation suggested a reciprocal relation between citizens and their government. Thus, Lincoln articulated a powerful idea that has opened opportunities for democratic initiative throughout American history.

Today, when the majority of people have little sense that government belongs to the citizens and when appeals for justice fall largely on deaf ears, Lincoln's way of thinking about citizen-government partnership can speak to the crisis of democratic politics. An enormous chasm has opened between the people and public institutions. In 1958, 73 percent of Americans believed that government "could be trusted to do the right thing most of the time." Today, this percentage has dropped to the low twenties, and most people believe the federal government does more harm than good.

Conventional wisdom points to many explanatory factors. Revulsion at Watergate and other scandals; false choices and poll-driven posturings in elections; the corruption of politics by the unquenchable drive for money—all these contribute. But the deeper problem is that people have lost the sense that government is "ours." There is an urgent need for a renewed investment in our common life. The sense of popular ownership can come only from a broad movement that rebuilds public culture in fundamental ways.

Resources for this task can be found in the commonwealth tradition. Commonwealth was once a luminous and potent political term. It had currency especially in what historian Michael Kazin has called the "producerist" tradition of progressive and populist politics. Commonwealth (or often in party platforms and reform manifestos, "the cooperative commonwealth") was both descriptive and prescriptive. It conveyed the conviction that all citizens are, at least potentially, civic producers —building and sustaining public goods and popular government through their work. It also advanced a normative ideal of a just commonwealth in which the distribution of wealth and power was equal enough to allow self-governance. It enabled those on the margins to demand full inclusion based on the civic authority they gained through their public contributions, not through appeals to sympathy.

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Commonwealth themes formed a powerful axis for democratic politics in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America, different from both a state-centered left and a market-oriented right. Well into the 1940s the commonwealth generated a political vocabulary for challenging unbridled private power and for popular participation in government and public life. Today, when establishment voices like the *New York Times* worry about the privatization of "common pools" of resources and when all signs point to a pervasive sense of powerlessness among the citizenry, the commonwealth tradition and the way it fused citizen labors with popular government merit another look.

The Commonwealth Tradition

The commonwealth idea was taken up by many different political figures and movements in the broad progressive tradition. It was used by Theodore Roosevelt, and also by activists such as the African-American poet Frances Harper and the feminist writer Frances Willard, by populists like Henry Demerest Lloyd and socialists like Eugene Debs. The term fused themes from both political and social history into a conception of government of the people. In political terms it recalled English antimonarchical traditions of popular government. Four states are official commonwealths. The term also emerges from the social histories of immigrant groups where it meant the "commons" (that is, roads, pasture lands, waterways, public buildings, and public services) that everyone was involved in helping to create and maintain.

Every society has a commons that forms its physical and social scaffolding: the physical infrastructure like dams, waterways, roads, bridges, and parks, and also lasting political and cultural institutions upon which all depend. Exactly what it includes can always be debated, but that it exists has been widely understood. Even the founder of modern market economics, Adam Smith, recognized the importance of public things:

> The last duty of the commonwealth is that of erecting and maintaining those public institutions and those public works which, though they may be in the highest degree advantageous to a great society, are, however, of such a nature that the profit could never repay the expense to any individual or small number.

The American commons differed from its counterparts in other nations. It was neither handed down from antiquity nor defined by authoritative religion. It was neither a gift bestowed by an aristocracy, as in France, nor the benevolence of a paternalistic state, as in Prussia. In America, the commons was created through cooperative and self-interested labor of the people. As people created the commonwealth, they also became the commonwealth. They developed boldness for action and confidence in their own authority. They blurred the boundaries between themselves and government. Indeed, the term commonwealth was used interchangeably to mean both the general citizenry and democratic government.

The balance between public life and private pursuits has always been precarious. America has had a strong strand of "get rich quick" individualism. We are the land of colorful entrepreneurs, gold diggers, and lottery winners. At best this individualism fueled an entrepreneurial spirit that has been a source of constant innovation and healthy restlessness. But historically, the individual pursuit of private wealth was counterbalanced by a commonwealth politics that generated popular authority and democratic power through its valuation of the public world that the people created.

The belief that even private wealth had a public dimension served as rallying cry for many groups. Thus, in the midst of the economic crisis in Philadelphia in 1779, artisans challenged Robert Morris, a wealthy merchant, for shipping grain outside the city. In view of the local scarcity of bread, they argued, Morris's property rights were held in check by the social origins of property and the needs of the community. "We hold service of the vessel," they argued, "because it constitutes a considerable part of the advantage [the workers] hoped to derive from their labors." Property is subject to the commonwealth, they continued: "The property of the vessel is the immediate right of the owners, but the service of it is the right of the community

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collectively with the owners."

More than a century later, in 1908, Theodore Roosevelt's influential "new nationalism" speech calling for government regulation of trusts and large corporations used a similar rationale based on the civic authority of those who created the nation's wealth. "The true friend of property, the true conservative, is he who insists that property shall be the servant and not the master of the commonwealth," declared Roosevelt. "The citizens of the United States must effectively control the mighty commercial forces which they have themselves called into being."

Roosevelt, of course, spoke in a social and economic context far different from the agricultural and artisanal world of the late eighteenth century. Urbanization, the rise of scientifically credentialed experts, mass communications, and industrialism posed new challenges for those who envisioned an active democracy in which ordinary citizens had voice and standing. But the Progressives who shaped the politics of the first decades of the twentieth century had little use for a democracy of ordinary people. They combined an overriding faith in the power of science and the wisdom of scientifically trained professionals. They argued that government, through expert engineering, could become a rational instrument for democratic control of "the mighty commercial forces."

There is, however, a forgotten but quite different and more democratic underside of the Progressive era, one that reflected the commonwealth tradition, in which the idea of a "citizen government" remained central. Teddy Roosevelt embodied the contradictory currents of Progressivism. On the one hand, he was greatly influenced by the ideologues of the scientific elite. On the other, he was an ally of many who believed in government as the instrument of an independent citizenry.

Thus, Roosevelt established the Country Life Commission in 1908, which proposed a nationwide system of county agents, called "cooperative extension," supported by government and employed through land-grant colleges. Cooperative extension had a robust democratic mission. For architects of the extension system, the idea of "public work that builds the commonwealth" formed a scaffolding for a process of citizen empowerment catalyzed by government.

Cooperative extension's philosophy was similar to the approach of Progressives such as Louis Brandeis, Jane Addams, and W.E.B. Du Bois. From their perspective, government did not displace self-initiated action, as many communitarians argue today. Rather, government agencies interacted with an array of institutions to create the tools through which ordinary citizens could shape the larger world. Popular organizations and people's government were the indispensable foundations for struggles for justice and challenges to concentrated wealth and power.

Similar ideas influenced a variety of New Deal programs like the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Federal Writers Project and other cultural efforts that promoted public work, and in its early years, the Tennessee Valley Authority. Public work projects made the New Deal the people's creation. The New Deal was not simply "for the people."

Today, both the practice and spirit of commonwealth have all but disappeared. Our experience of public life has changed radically; the authority that people once derived from engagement in public work and the sense that government is an instrument for civic effort have been lost. Consequently citizens express a pervasive sense of powerlessness.

After World War II, Americans experienced a dramatic shift in public and civic identities, the consequences of which haunt us today. Increasingly, people came to understand themselves as consumers, not producers. Work was more and more specialized, losing visible connection to what was produced and becoming a means to a paycheck rather than a worthy activity in itself. The definition of wealth changed dramatically in this process. Wealth was once understood to include many nonmonetary things: schools, human talents, cultural and natural resources. After the Second World War, wealth was defined as the Gross National Product—a measure of commodities produced and financial transactions undertaken in the formal economy. As the public face of wealth disappeared, citizens lost the authority they gained

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through its creation.

Associated with these changes were wide-ranging shifts in citizens' relationship to government. Citizenship turned into a sentimentalized version of volunteerism—what one does "after work," disconnected from sources of democratic power. The nature of government work also changed, with specialization and experts coming to dominate. "We've lost the 'civil' in 'civil service,' " one federal worker recounted in the sessions on citizen alienation that the Center for Democracy and Citizenship held in 1994. "We no longer see ourselves as part of the citizens; now we're outside, doing things for the people or to the people."

An increasing professionalization of unions, political parties, and reform organizations took place parallel to such changes in government. It was not a simple or quick process—in the 1960s, much of government and many popular organizations still carried a larger public mission. But over time democracy was defined by the language of service delivery and the marketplace. Political campaigns now resemble the selling of toothpaste, requiring an endless search for dollars. Conventions are reduced to advertisements. The watchwords in government are "customer service" and "privatization." Meanwhile, civic organizations, educational institutions, and social protest groups now also offer benefits to "customers."

The Seattle Example

In recent decades it has taken conscious effort to retrieve the idea of the commonwealth. The story of a community battling for survival in Seattle suggests how such retrieval can have wide effects.

Terry Pettus, a newspaperman and union organizer, moved to Seattle in the 1920s. Over the next two decades he was a leading figure in many popular movements: labor organizing, the fight for public utilities and rural electrification, and a campaign to win industrial-accident insurance and old-age pensions. At the heart of each was the notion of the commonwealth.

In the mid-1930s, Pettus helped organize labor unions, farmers, and neighborhood groups into a progressive movement akin to many others in the country of that period. It was called first "Commonwealth Builders, Inc." and later the Washington Commonwealth Federation. In the 1940s, the Commonwealth Federation enjoyed majority support in the state.

Terry and his wife, Berta, lived in a free-wheeling houseboat community on Lake Union near downtown Seattle. Boatyard workers, sailors, students, poor people, and bohemians mingled with retired radicals from the Industrial Workers of the World. Along the shores, speakeasies and brothels were scattered through the small shacks and apartments.

In 1962, city officials moved to evict boaters in order to clear the lakefront for apartment buildings and other development projects. A major complaint against the houseboaters was sewage pollution on the lake. Few knew that the boaters' sewage was a minuscule one-half of 1 percent of the total that was dumped from the city's thirteen sewer lines. "I knew we could never win by debating percentages," said Pettus.

Briefly jailed in the 1950s during the McCarthy period, Pettus understood that the houseboaters could not survive through protest politics. Most people in Seattle saw them, at best, as scruffy oddballs; at worst, as disruptive radicals. Appeals to public sympathy or even an attempt at an alliance among all those victimized by developers stood little chance of success. The Floating Homes Association was formed as an alternative strategy. It aimed at solidifying the houseboat community, and it championed their cause through retrieval of the commonwealth tradition. The houseboaters tied their fate to the future of the city, the lake, and the environment.

Pettus and his neighbors described Lake Union as part of the public wealth of the people of Seattle—"a gift to us from the Ice Age." Key to the strategy was connecting the heritage of the city and the lake to ideas of work and contribution. Instead of claiming "less responsibility" than others for lake pollution, to the consternation of City Hall, the houseboaters demanded that they be permitted to pay for sewer lines to their boats. They held workshops on how to weld pipes and hook them up.

As the campaign developed, houseboaters defended the idea of the lake as an environmental resource, a working lake with a rich history

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of multiple uses—boat building, commerce, residency, recreation, all interconnected. They sponsored tours, involved the media and schools in historical research, organized social events and festivals, and made alliances with neighborhood groups across the city. Through this process, the legacy and symbolism of the lake acquired vibrant power. By the middle 1960s, the association enjoyed remarkable popular support.

Indispensable to the houseboaters organizing was a renewal of the Washington Commonwealth Federation's notion of government as the instrument of the whole people. The campaign was able to get the city council to block industrial use of a large area, move the city to acquire twenty-three acres to create a public park, and inspire the state legislature to pass one of the nation's strongest shoreline management control acts. Terry Pettus chaired the commission that developed the guidelines and helped to write the legislation.

The Lake Union campaign helped catalyze a generation of citizen activism. Many activists in the environmental and neighborhood movements of the 1970s and 1980s trace their lineage directly to its work. Even establishment leaders who fought the community activists acknowledged the benefits. "Seattle had a major era of citizen participation," said James Ellis, a man sometimes called the informal leader of the city's elite. As a result, "there was an incredible flowering in the city."

This story reveals multiple resources for democratic action. The power of the houseboaters' campaign derived from the questions it posed about the importance of the environment and the meaning of progress in the context of a revitalization of "government of the people." Engaging a broad public, addressing practical issues of work and wealth, and renewing popular government: these are the keys to democratic power.

Yet the story of Lake Union also presents an obvious puzzle. If a commonwealth framing for popular action can have such success in a contemporary setting, why isn't this approach used everywhere in response to the enormous civic and economic challenges facing the nation, from corporate layoffs to the closing of hospitals to welfare reform?

Limits of Contemporary Frameworks

The categories people use to imagine who they are and what they can do shape the range of their efforts. For instance, work identities—whether as a carpenter or college professor — structure ways of naming problems and planning strategies for action. They develop through a long socialization process including formal credentialing and incentive systems. Work identities pattern power relationships with co-workers, clients, and communities. We want to argue that current conceptions of citizenship and government, detached from everyday life, cramp what Americans might otherwise be able to accomplish with a renewed commonwealth perspective.

In the 1990s, two main conceptual maps of citizenship dominate—the progressive and the communitarian. Both have resources for thinking about citizen effort. But neither addresses the central dilemma of democracy in our time—the fact that government has come to seem alien to most citizens.

Today, most progressives see government as a protector of rights and a mechanism for distributing benefits and services. In a time of massive hostility toward government, the result is a defensive stance that considerably limits any possibility for generating broad democratic movement. Jeffrey Isaac articulated this difficulty in *Dissent* ("The Poverty of Progressivism," Fall 1996) when he argued that democratic possibilities are largely confined to "scattered oases of civic activism." Most organizing strategies, he believes, hold little hope of making a significant impact on national and international trends.

When the focus is on distribution and defense, citizen action operates out of a stance of collective grievance and shared victimhood. Public issues are polarized, often inflamed. The irony is that conservative strategy mirrors the progressive pattern. From the vantage of the Christian right, secular humanists and liberal cultural elites undermine traditional values and discriminate against religious believers. From a progressive perspective, the enemies are the corporate elite and their reactionary allies. Here, the left follows the formulation of the late Saul

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Alinsky, architect of the direct action organizing that developed in the 1970s and 1980s. In *Rules for Radicals*, his 1972 best-selling organizing manual, Alinsky argued that progressives should organize broad alliances of "have-nots" and "have-some-want-mores" against the "haves." Following this premise, technologies for mass mobilization were developed. Training centers taught the skills of advocacy, lobbying, and mobilization.

The dilemma that progressives have faced in recent years has been that their distributive politics places people largely in an outsider and consumer role, asking for a fair share of goods and services. Yet in a context of economic anxiety, stagnating or declining wages, and corporate downsizing, consumerism feeds a scarcity consciousness and a mood of whininess. Groups easily come to portray themselves as uniquely aggrieved; they demand more for themselves, and tolerate, even applaud, cutbacks for everyone else.

Even the most effective citizen organizing has yet to reclaim a full sense of commonwealth democracy. The network of citizen groups founded by Alinsky, called the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), is a striking example, for it has come to see the limits of citizen action based on a struggle of the have-nots against the haves. Yet the IAF still shares with other progressives a view of government as largely distributive and "outside" of the people.

Driven by a primary concern for developing leaders in minority and working-class communities who have the confidence and skill to act boldly and effectively on public questions, the IAF stresses a strategy of building power relationships among groups with diverse interests in order to create things of common value. Its organizers teach that the public world is an arena where one learns to work on projects of value with people of radically different backgrounds and interests. The IAF has successfully demonstrated that work on infrastructural projects like schools, water systems, and communications can bring groups with clashing world views together in forums that create work for a larger public purpose.

Gerald Taylor, IAF national staff organizer, described the creation of such forums as the move from simple protest to governance: "The first struggle for the black community, coming out of a segregated history, is the fight to be recognized. When you've been out of power so long, there's a tendency to not want to be responsible or to be held accountable. But to participate in creating history, one must move into power." "Moving into power," in Taylor's view, means being prepared "to negotiate, to understand that others have power and different ways of viewing the world." It involves engagement with others rather than protest as the primary strategy.

The IAF approach has resurfaced the potential power that ordinary people can gain through the production of public things. Its limit, however, is that its organizations continue to operate mostly out of an old-fashioned populist analysis of power, where the major players are corporate interests. It sees politicians and professionals as mainly serving the interests of business. The IAF does not imagine government as a catalyst for citizen efforts. It assumes that politicians' self-interests are necessarily different from those of the general citizenry and maintains strong strictures against its leaders' running for office.

To develop a broad movement for the democratization of modern society requires retrieving older catalytic models of professional and government work that were reflected in such traditions as Jane Addams's Hull House, cooperative extension, and New Deal public work projects. This means recognizing that power is in a sense "locked up" in human service, educational, and government institutions today. People's work is limited by the dominant definitions of those "served" as clients or consumers rather than co-producers.

Communitarianism

The other dominant framework for citizen action stresses community-building, deliberation, and social responsibility. At its best, such a perspective retrieves the important concept of public judgment as opposed to mere private opinion. It highlights the roles of local and small scale community institutions. But the communitarian approach obscures power rela-

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tions. It also produces a sentimentalized view of the citizen as a volunteer. Moreover, its focus on such values as responsibility can easily lead to exhortations to conform to conventional middle-class norms.

Communitarians locate citizen action in "civil society," a sphere separated from government and work. Civil society's fundamental purposes in this view are to generate social trust and develop civic virtue. This perspective has gained a wide following in recent years. For instance, the Council on Civil Society, a joint project of the University of Chicago Divinity School and the bipartisan Institute for American Values, argues that "the possibility of American renewal in the next century depends decisively upon the revitalization of our civil society and our rediscovery of the American idea." The council defines civil society as "those relationships and institutions that exist in a sphere of society largely separate from both the institutions of government and the dynamics of the market economy."

A myriad of current initiatives reflect this view of citizen action: community service and service-learning, character education in schools, national initiatives to promote volunteerism. In all of these, citizens are called to be responsible for families and communities—to be helpful, thoughtful, or caring. The focus is not on learning to be bold, accountable public actors.

In the context of human service and educational institutions, communitarianism uses a language of concern, personal growth, and community-building that hides power dynamics. High school community service programs, for instance, emphasize personal development and the experience of service itself. One broad survey of high school programs found that they featured objectives such as "self-esteem," "a sense of personal worth," "self-understanding," "consciousness about one's personal values," and the "exploration of new identities."

The translation of this caring and community-building ethos into human service systems generates a professional practice based on a pervasive view of people on the margins as deficient. The labels that proliferate illustrate the point: "children at risk," "culturally deprived communities," "underserved populations," "welfare-dependent mothers." This view positions professional and volunteer helpers as active agents and their clients as needy recipients. Both helpers and those receiving help are trapped in roles that limit their productive energies and powers.

Democratic action needs to integrate the direct power focus of groups like the IAF with the specific cultures and dynamics of the institutions that constitute contemporary civil society. And it needs to go beyond both progressive and communitarian approaches to develop a conception of government of and by the people—the catalyst and tool for citizens doing public work that builds the commonwealth.

Remaking the Commonwealth

Surveys in 1997 find most Americans deeply discouraged about our collective ability to address growing national challenges. Not since the resignation of Richard Nixon has the public expressed such pessimism about America's future.

An instructive comparison is with the 1920s, when voting levels and people's disaffection with government were as stark as they are today. In her splendid book *Making a New Deal*, historian Lizabeth Cohen details the way working-class communities in Chicago came to feel strong support for the New Deal, labor unions, and the federal government. Her story illustrates the sort of commonwealth politics that we need to renew.

In the 1920s in Chicago, blacks overwhelmingly continued to back the Republicans—the "Party of Lincoln"—while most ethnic working-class communities in Chicago had little use for the federal government in any sense. Ethnic political loyalties were to the local ward boss. More generally, workers identified with ethnic organizations and employers who used a rhetoric of benevolent "welfare capitalism." In 1924, less than a third of foreign-born workers turned out for the presidential election.

By the late 1930s, the political culture had experienced profound change. Surveys found a strikingly class-aware population. Chicago working people were unlike European socialist workers. Few favored "socialism," or govern-

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ment ownership of industry. But the vast majority of Chicago's working people believed that the federal government and strong labor unions were essential counterweights to the power of industry. They were proud of their identities as workers and bold in asserting their prerogatives. More than four-fifths believed in strong labor unions. Ninety percent of the unskilled workers and 81 percent of semiskilled workers favored Roosevelt's New Deal. Three-quarters believed that government should help redistribute wealth.

"Newfound faith in the state and the unions was not preordained," observes Cohen. "It required workers to make significant breaks with previous values and behavior and to adopt new ones." A number of dynamics contributed to the transformation of political culture: the benefits that people received in a time of crisis, shifts in the Catholic church and Chicago politics, Roosevelt's success in transferring the personal loyalties workers had once felt toward ethnic groups and employers to himself. But the key was that workers believed themselves to have helped *create* the New Deal in many ways, from voting to union activism to public work programs like the WPA and CCC. "[W]orkers were moving beyond the hierarchical authority relationship implicit in paternalism which made them dependents. As contributing members of society, they made no apologies" for the federal benefits they received. Indeed, workers' sense of the possibilities of governmental activism rapidly outran that of most New Deal leaders.

Roosevelt contributed to the New Deal transformation in political culture by constantly depicting government as the agency of the people. In his second inaugural address, he painted the portrait of a nation where millions were "denied education, recreation, and the opportunity to better their lot . . . one third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill- nourished." But he declared that such problems were challenges, not obstacles. They were reasons for "hope," not "despair." The nation, he declared, had the means to act. He called upon the citizenry to find through "government the instrument of our common united purpose to solve . . . the problems of a complex civilization."

The Clinton administration has a different approach. The most substantial effort to address citizen disaffection has been the "Reinventing Government" initiative spearheaded by Al Gore. But "Reinventing Government" is a vivid illustration of progressive politics in a consumer culture where citizens are imagined as the recipients of government largess.

Reinventing Government is billed as an effort to regain support for "smaller, less bureaucratic, more entrepreneurial and flexible government." The administration's metaphor for reinventing government defines the citizen as a customer. Advocates advance the idea as a way to shatter bureaucracy, create flexibility, and "squeeze ever more bang for the buck." David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, whose *Reinventing Government* is the main textbook of current efforts, explicitly advocate a shift from seeing citizens as clients to seeing them as customers. In their terms, empowerment means market choice. They argue that to adapt to an information age with diverse life styles and more highly educated and therefore more demanding consumers, government must not simply produce standardized services; it must get "close to the customer." "To cope with these massive changes, entrepreneurial governments have begun to listen carefully to their customers, through customer surveys, focus groups, and a wide variety of other methods."

"Getting close to customers" is the watchword these days throughout every government agency. This grows from the Total Quality Management movement in business, which has sought to "flatten the hierarchy" and create team-like work communities more responsive to customers. But this is the curious empowerment characteristic of our age, when market language has taken hold in almost every sector of society. However sensitively done, such a focus makes government the center of the action, and the public "outside" the object of the action.

The Clinton administration has also sought to address the crisis in citizen-government relationships through a complementary communitarian approach that urges a new era of volunteerism—what Clinton called "Big Citizenship" at the Presidential Summit—to make up for the reduced government role. Big

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Citizenship's flagship initiative is AmeriCorps, which has undertaken projects reminiscent of the Civilian Conservation Corps and other New Deal public work efforts. But its rationale as well as its scale are different. AmeriCorps backers claim that the community service program is an antidote to "me-first selfishness" and declining rates of voluntary involvement. Conservatives argue that it is precisely citizenship that is jeopardized by the program: why should the federal government promote compassion or pay for volunteers? The irony is that supporters and critics equate "active citizenship" with volunteerism.

Despite its symbolic importance, AmeriCorps is still a tiny program. Meanwhile, reinventing government has been met with a giant public yawn, as the management guru Peter Drucker observed in the *Atlantic*. Only a renewed emphasis on citizenship as productive public work and government as the instrument and catalyst for such work offer serious hope for generating new democratic energy on a significant scale. Though examples are scattered—still far from the widespread and multilayered cultural transformation that will be needed—there are nonetheless intimations in government practice and public policy that suggest stirrings of a new commonwealth movement.

Here and there, public leaders articulate a commonwealth approach. For instance, Elizabeth Kautz, the mayor of Burnsville, a Twin Cities suburb in Minnesota, ran her election campaign with the slogan, "Government doesn't have to be bad!" She meant to return to a view of government as a catalyst, not mainly a service provider. "All of us together need to create a citizenry who is empowered to do the work of the public," she explains. "Government can help. But in an era of limited resources and great challenges, I can't pretend to fix things anymore, and neither can anybody in government."

When teenage skateboarders got in trouble for skating in school buildings, Kautz asked them what could be done to change their behavior. "If you get us a skateboard park, we'll stop skating where we're not supposed to," they said. To which Kautz replied: "I'm not going to 'get' anything for you—that's not how I see my job. I will work with you to open some doors. But you're going to have to organize the community yourselves." Working with several adults, the teenagers negotiated agreements with neighborhoods, city agencies, businesses, and insurance companies. They raised money, developed a design and gained support from the city to build the park.

The skateboard story is one example of a wide effort at civic renewal in Burnsville called "Partnerships for Tomorrow." The overall objective is to rebuild the community by tapping latent human talents and other resources in new ways. Kautz describes Burnsville as a "commonwealth" and a "community of abundance." Government work has been redesigned and clustered in six priorities set by citizens (safety, youth, neighborhoods, development, environment, and transportation) with substantial partnerships and citizen involvement in each area.

The Burnsville initiative hinges on a fundamental redefinition of government. "We've had to get beyond customer service, so that public outcomes are widely owned by the citizens," explains Kautz. City Manager Greg Konat points out that this is difficult, given dominant assumptions. "Moving beyond the customer service model has meant that we had to recognize we can't do all the public tasks in government, even if we'd like to. Rather than just provide services, we've redefined our overall objectives as helping to build community." This approach means a change in identity for city workers. It returns "civil" to civil service, with city employees coming to see themselves as citizens working with other citizens. "This shift in identity is not easy for a lot of people in government, but it's critical," says Konat. While city government continues to emphasize "quality service," government workers have shifted their focus away from "customer service." "Now we serve more as the catalyst," explains Konat. "We help call meetings together in the neighborhoods or with business or with schools. Government has a role. We can provide certain expertise. But most of the answers have to come from within the community."

In addition to examples like Burnsville, instances of how policy can be recast in commonwealth ways have begun to multiply. The wel-

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fare debate suggests one possibility. As in the Lake Union story, welfare-to-work opens the potential to move beyond the scarcity mentality that demonizes welfare recipients, seeing them simply as a drain on society. To realize this potential will require broadening the rationale for public work jobs from arguments about their benefits to welfare recipients (as a "transition" to "real work") to an emphasis on how poor people can create public goods of benefit for all.

Current examples of public work that grow out of WPA and CCC traditions suggest this rationale. One of the most successful, the Milwaukee Service Corps, is an urban version of the CCC. It receives a good deal of its funding from AmeriCorps, but its staff disagrees strongly with the AmeriCorps approach. "We see service as the byproduct of work, not work as the byproduct of service," says Joel Haubrich, information director. "Our workers don't show up with a smile on their face saying 'we want to serve.' They come because they want to get their lives turned around through getting a job."

Groups like the Milwaukee Corps stress the dignity and importance of work with public meaning that makes an obvious contribution to the life and well-being of communities. Haubrich says, "We're always looking for larger, bigger, more crucial projects. Public projects give a sense of purpose. Public projects give a sense of hope, a feeling of pride and accomplishment."

Describing public jobs as much more than transitions from welfare—as illustrating an entirely different understanding of the relationship of citizens and government —furnishes a potentially potent argument for such jobs. Indeed, many Republicans back projects like the Youth Corps, and some, such as former Bush policy adviser Jim Pinkerton, have called for a new Civilian Conservation Corps.

There are the rudiments of an infrastructure of such groups across the country that potentially can articulate this argument. The Milwaukee Corps is part of the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, with well over a hundred members. YouthBuild, a similar network of inner-city projects, has a hundred affiliates. If you count in a variety of other groups such as community foundations; community development corporations; groups like the Industrial Areas Foundation, whose affiliates are now considering a major push for WPA-style jobs; and policy groups like the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, the beginnings of a critical mass appear.

Local communities and commonwealth policy initiatives should be seen as building blocks for a broader movement that needs to take shape in a large number of settings and institutions. The challenge in renewing democracy is to translate these practices and this political language to the larger "system worlds" of government, education, and human service that were denuded of civic muscle as they became service providers. This requires retrieving for our time professional practices that were aimed at cultivating and "freeing" the energies and talents of the citizenry.

Public work calls for a seriousness of purpose. It frames "problem solving" (far too instrumental a language to convey democratic purposes) in a fashion that draws attention to the larger significance of local and community efforts—what it is that people actually create or build of lasting social and civic value. Finally, for people in service jobs it redefines "clients" or "customers" as co-producers.

Public work is the action principle of the commonwealth. Voting, mobilizing, and advocating for rights and benefits alone are not sufficient; neither are calls for community and responsibility. Only as we renew cultures and practices of public work on a large scale will we be able to regenerate the sense that government is ours and that we are the authors of our common destiny. □

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David Glenn

MAKING THEM FLINCH

Five Riddles for the Labor Movement

How successfully has the American labor movement revived since John Sweeney took the reins a year and a half ago? One measure is the return of full-throated labor bashing in our public life. For the past generation or so, attacking unions had been a stealthy (if lucrative) business. Consulting firms and think tanks would whisper formulas for busting unions into the ears of managers and state legislators—but rarely felt the urge to take their cause to the public. Today, however, you can hardly turn on CNN without seeing Republican apparatchiks shouting oaths at "Big Labor" or "left-wing labor bosses." And Jack Welch, the CEO of General Electric, recently mailed a videotape of himself, *Mission: Impossible*-style, to thousands of GE managers, imploring them to mount the barricades in advance of contract talks: "We don't need some third party to give people voice and dignity," proclaims the $22 million-a-year chairman. "You better get prepared like you have never been prepared. . . .We get monthly updates . . . as to how you are going to operate. We'll show the world how we can operate in a strike and not flinch if that's what happens."

It's clear that *something* is getting under corporate America's skin. The AFL-CIO has taken real steps since John Sweeney and his allies won the leadership in late 1995: the much-publicized "Union Summer" program, which has trained thousands of young activists in the rudiments of organizing; thirty-five million dollars in political advertising; and aggressive drives in the strawberry fields of California and the entire service sector of Las Vegas. Labor has used its new visibility to raise exactly the questions that American business dreads most: Why, in the seventh year of an economic recovery, are Americans' feelings of economic insecurity, as measured by pollsters, at a post-Depression high? And what do Jack Welch and his ilk do all day, that they should earn a thousand times more than schoolteachers, nurses, or fire fighters?

After decades of labor somnolence, all of this is good news—even a little thrilling. As one long-time organizer puts it, "I never thought I'd see these changes. It's astonishing—every day I pick up the paper and see something else labor is getting involved with." But the new leadership's thorniest challenges still lie in front of it. Labor has revitalized its core and put a scare into its enemies; but that in itself can't erase the four decades of severe decline that preceded 1995. As the labor economist Richard Freeman told the *New York Times* in February, Sweeney has great strengths, but he and his colleagues may nonetheless be "captains of a sinking ship."

Now, the talented group of people that Sweeney has assembled faces the challenge of converting labor's newfound energy into a sustainable strategy for growth. Labor needs both to maximize its power on a hostile playing field—by many measures, ours is the most anti-labor nation in the developed world—and also find ways to transform that playing field. This will involve hard choices—and on all of these questions, there are spirited arguments among labor leaders and their allies.

Can Labor Redeploy its Resources?

For all their public prominence, the officers of the AFL-CIO can't quite claim to be the "lead-

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ership" of the American labor movement. The federation exists to serve its constituent unions, not the other way around. And although Sweeney's slate campaigned on a platform of renewed organizing, and have launched some clever and effective intitatives, in the end their weapon is the bully pulpit. "People have to learn all of this for themselves, on the ground," says Stewart Acuff, president of the Atlanta Labor Council. "We can't go around preaching to workers in Atlanta about all the great things that are happening in Las Vegas. You want to talk about people being organized right here: the mechanics at Valujet, where no one thought they'd ever be able to organize. Or the workers at the Marshall's distribution center in the suburbs."

The need to devote serious resources to organizing ought to be obvious. "We've got roughly fifty print shops in Atlanta," says Acuff. "And only 20 percent of them are organized. The average salary at the nonunion shops is around twenty thousand, and the average at the union shops is about three times that. So it ought to be obvious to the union print workers: if they don't organize the rest of the industry, they're presiding over their own demise."

Apparently this lesson isn't obvious enough: many unions during the past three decades have devoted only a tiny fraction of their resources to new organizing. It's easy to sympathize with unions' impulse to sit back and nurse their existing contracts: new organizing, especially during a period when Reagan appointees have dominated the NLRB, is grueling and dispiriting. And as Richard Rothstein has argued, local union leaderships are sometimes institutionally conservative, fearing that an influx of newly organized workers would disrupt their electoral base.

Sweeney's new team—along with ascendant reformist leaderships in several internationals—has set out to reverse this pattern. The SEIU recently launched a system that gives locals an elaborate series of financial and staffing incentives to increase the percentage of their budgets devoted to new organizing. The AFL-CIO isn't in a position to offer such carrots to its constitutent unions, but it has done what it can to nudge them along. First, the Organizing Department has radically expanded the Organizing Institute and Union Summer programs, which train college-age organizers (and also seriously reduce the staffing burdens of many campaigns). Second, the department is using its influence to prod unions to relax their turf worries and to work cooperatively across jurisdictional lines. Several large-scale multi-union drives are likely to be announced during the next nine months. And finally, the federation has organized a series of regional conferences designed to preach the gospel of organizing and to bring activists together to share "best practices."

Whom to Organize?

This question may sound foolish. American unions have been losing members by the hundreds of thousands, as rust-belt industries decline and the service sector continues to resist organizing. The bleeding has slowed during the past two years, but labor would need to organize over a million members each year for the next decade in order to recover the proportion of the work force it covered at its early-1950s peak. So why be choosy?

Here's why: nearly every observer agrees that labor needs to wean itself from "hot shop" organizing, in which unions pour resources into shops that already have serious grievances. It's comforting to think that aggrieved workers at unorganized plants can call up a union and get serious attention—but this 911 model too often substitutes for serious strategic planning. Hot shop organizing generally has little to do with maximizing a union's power within a particular community or industry.

Consider the work of Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) Local 100 in New York City. Local 100 is currently waging two high-profile campaigns. The first aims at The Box Tree, a tony East Side restaurant that the union became involved with in 1993 on a hot-shop basis. The second is an elaborately planned campaign targeting Riese Restaurants, a 180-unit company that operates various franchises (T.G.I. Fridays, Dunkin' Donuts) throughout the metropolitan area. A victory at The Box Tree would certainly be stirring—its seriously exploited immigrant workers have been walking the picket lines for nearly four years.

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But a victory at Riese would be more than stirring: it would have a palpable effect on the wage landscape of New York restaurants.

Abandoning the hot shop model is uncontroversial; but just what type of strategic organizing to undertake is a stickier question. Many of the strategic campaigns of the last decade have targeted government workers, because in most states the barriers to public-sector organizing are relatively low. For the United Electrical Workers, for example, this has meant organizing part-time toll-booth workers on the Ohio Turnpike and the faculty and staff of the University of Vermont. These campaigns have often been effective and worthwhile—indeed, a few unions might not have survived the 1980s without forays into the public sector—but some trade unionists fear that government organizing sometimes serves as a distraction, an evasive maneuver. Labor's *real* test, this argument insists, is organizing low-skilled service employees in the private sector. These are the country's most vulnerable workers—and Wal-Mart, after all, is hiring faster than any government agency.

It is with these questions in mind that labor activists are keenly scrutinizing the ongoing strategic projects in Las Vegas and in the strawberry fields of California. In Las Vegas, HERE and several other unions have combined forces to target the entire range of hotel, restaurant, and casino workers. And in California, the United Farm Workers have launched a strategic campaign that targets the entire strawberry sector. In each case the AFL-CIO has committed to provide an array of national resources: training, coordination, and public relations. The strawberry campaign is still in its early stages, but the Las Vegas effort—which draws on organizing launched a full decade ago—appears to be a strong success. "Everybody's looking at these drives," says Wade Rathke, a founder of the community organization ACORN who now organizes with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in New Orleans. "We're out there dying—if somebody's got a cure for cancer, we're not waiting for the FDA to certify it."

The federation can commit resources to such campaigns only when it is, in effect, invited to join. It has no authority to dictate its constituent unions' organizing practices. Insofar as the Las Vegas and strawberry campaigns are successful, they will not provide models that can simply be imposed on the rest of labor. The decision to devote resources to strategic organizing will need to be made local by local and union by union. "The difficulty has been moving 'best practices' into large-scale campaigns," says Rathke. He is also anxious that the Las Vegas experience will prove unreplicable because too many unions are reluctant to work in collaboration. (Indeed, even in Las Vegas there have been a few turf wars.) "We need the political will to get past these encrusted jurisdiction fights. Somebody's got to shake things up. We don't have John Lewis taking a swing at Bill Hutcheson out there—unfortunately."

Elaine Bernard, the director of Harvard University's Trade Union Program, wonders aloud whether labor needs a still *more* leveraged approach. Suppose the AFL-CIO emulated the French labor movement, which likes to target sectors—most famously, transportation—that lie in the economy's soft underbelly. "Think of clerical workers in the financial sector," she says. "They're hard to organize, but they'd be worth the effort—they're in a position to shut the country down."

The Card Check Question

With labor law reform nowhere on the horizon, U.S. unions are faced with the challenge of squeezing everything they can from the existing framework. One increasingly popular strategem is so-called "card check" organizing, in which unions try to pressure employers directly into the bargaining room as soon as they've signed up a strong majority on the shop floor. This *démarche* bypasses the formal National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election process, which too often permits employers to bully and stonewall unions out of existence. (See David Brody's "Labor Elections: Still Good for Workers?" *Dissent*, Spring 1997, for a fuller discussion.)

Card-check organizing is being tested in all sorts of arenas, but its current showcase is the Las Vegas project. It's not a tactic for the faint of heart: employers will not waive their right to an election without a convincing show of union

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muscle. John Wilhelm, a HERE organizer who has played a major role in Las Vegas, has made card-check tactics work by weaving together community alliances, financial pressure on corporate boards, civil disobedience, and savvy bargaining.

"The NLRB model is attractive on a short sprint," says the SEIU's Rathke. "But unions usually shouldn't be on a short sprint. Look at the steel workers: they're building member-only representation plans in several of the new [small] mills. They're convinced that they can avoid NLRB organizing—[and they're] laying deep and permanent roots on the way toward building a majority."

Not everyone is so convinced. One tenacious partisan of the NLRB route is Bruce Raynor, the Southern Regional Director of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees (UNITE). In Southern states where unions lack a real toehold, Raynor argues, it's extremely tough to bring enough pressure on employers to force them to respect card-check majorities. The NLRB process may be treacherous and slow—but it offers Raynor's campaigns a certain degree of public legitimacy and breathing space. (Raynor and HERE's Wilhelm, who have conducted a friendly long-distance debate over the card-check question, recently exchanged visits. Wilhelm spent several days in the rural South, and Raynor paid a call to Las Vegas, to explore some of their disagreements at first hand. A small, heartening sign of the times: labor's best organizers are so eager to learn what works that they'll put serious time and energy into investigating every avenue.)

How to Conduct Corporate Campaigns?

When Dennis Riese, the president and CEO of Riese Restaurants, realized that his firm was being targeted by HERE, he cheerfully told union leaders, "There's nothing you can do to me. What are you going to do—strike?" Three years later, the outcome of the Riese campaign is still very much in doubt; but HERE has managed to give Dennis Riese undreamt-of headaches. The engine room of the campaign has been Local 100's research department, which has aggressively scrutinized Riese's management and financial profile—and hasn't been shy about sharing its findings with potential creditors and investors. The local has recently distributed leaflets that attack one of Riese's creditors for its ties to the Union Bank of Switzerland, which was exposed earlier this year as a harbor for Nazi-era gold.

Unions throughout the country are beefing up their research departments—both in the service of guerrilla tactics like Local 100's and for the more prosaic purpose of strategic targeting. And the AFL-CIO has unveiled a new Department of Corporate Affairs, whose mandate runs very wide. Ron Blackwell, who directs the new department, told a conference in February that "[t]he AFL-CIO is trying to provide leadership to help workers challenge employers at every level. Not just at the level of collective bargaining, but also above, at the level of governance and ownership, and below, at the level of workplace democracy." The department will tackle the governance-and-ownership level in part by encouraging unions to leverage their pension funds' holdings in various corporations. The Teamsters did just that earlier this year when they coordinated a shareholder resolution that challenged GE chair Jack Welch's astronomical earnings. The resolution failed, but it generated headlines—and may have subtly undercut Welch's videotaped message to his troops.

The corporate campaign model does not always harmonize easily with unions' democratic commitments to worker leadership and participation. Whereas the UAW militants of 1936 could shut down General Motors by sitting down en masse at their machines, today's most muscular labor "actions" are sometimes conducted by a few college-educated researchers in cubicles, poring over databases and 1099 forms. Local 100 has worked to unthread this tension by heavily involving its worker-leaders in every aspect of the campaign. The local's research director sits down and consults with the local's field organizers—most of whom come from the rank and file—at least twice a week. And when he visits (or pickets) loan officers, he always goes in the company of rank-and-file Riese workers.

A more troubling aspect of corporate campaigns is their potential to spawn bad faith. If your goal is to make life uncomfortable for cor-

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porate management, it may be tempting to play a few dirty tricks. One organizer recommends that the beleagured newspaper workers in Detroit launch a harrassment campaign against the boards of Gannett and Knight-Ridder: "Find out where they live, jam their fax machines, harass them when they go shopping." Are such practices unethical? That's not exactly the point—after all, Gannett and Knight-Ridder bullied the Detroit workers into striking in the first place. But such tactics ought to be used with caution. They leave unions vulnerable to legal action under racketeering statutes, an avenue employers are increasingly fond of (see David Brody's "Criminalizing the Rights of Labor," *Dissent,* Summer 1995).

Can Labor Wield Political Power?

"Labor '96 was a success," says Acuff. "We were effective at upping the number of union members who voted and participated in elections. But the problem is that we have a Democratic Party that isn't unified with us on our core issues." Acuff is a member of the New Party; he's not optimistic about efforts to form a true third party, but he believes that labor needs some sort of electoral apparatus independent of the Democratic establishment. "I've never thought that it made sense to spend a lot of resources on an institution that's anti-union. The things that the Democratic Party does to us, the Republican Party would never do to the Christian Coalition. When Democrats like [Georgia Governor Zell] Miller privatize everything left and right, they're gutting their own electoral base. Why in the world would you want to do that?"

One of the most ambitious of the new electoral efforts is Progressive Milwaukee, a New Party-affiliated venture that nurtures candidates—largely from the unions' rank-and-file or from other progressive organizations—to run in nonpartisan races for city council and the county board. Progressive Milwaukee's chair, John Goldstein, who is also Secretary-Treasurer of the Milwaukee Labor Council, says that Progressive Milwaukee's elected officials have raised policy questions that even the most progressive Democrats had failed to address. Last year these officials successfully enacted living wage ordinances for the city, the county, and the school board.

"It doesn't make sense every election cycle for unions to give huge amounts of money and then have nothing to show for it," says Goldstein. "We need to build our own apparatus. It's shocked some Democrats, but we've stopped sending volunteers out on campaigns. When we canvas door-to-door, it's always *our* apparatus talking about *our* issues."

This summer, unions were reminded that having allies in power—even allies as indigestible as Bill Clinton—sometimes matters. The Teamsters' successful strike of United Parcel Service was built on years of careful organizing and mobilization. But all of that work probably would have gone for naught if Bob Dole were sitting in the White House. He almost certainly would have invoked Taft-Hartley and forced the Teamsters back to work.

The UPS win was labor's largest victory in years. It has raised the level of anti-union hysteria among televison talking heads and on the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* to yet higher levels. But even as the UPS strike unfolded, the labor movement suffered two grim setbacks: workers at a Wal-Mart store in Wisconsin, which would have been only the second unionized Wal-Mart on the globe, soundly defeated an organizing vote. And UNITE narrowly lost an election at a giant Fieldcrest Cannon textile mill in North Carolina. Still, the triumph at UPS—and especially the unexpected levels of public support the Teamsters received—may someday be remembered as a major step forward for a more militant labor movement—the kind of movement that might make Jack Welch and his fellow CEOs sleep a little less easily. □

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H. Brand

GLOBAL CAPITALISM AND THE DECAY OF EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Despite the highest unemployment rate since 1933, the German central bank has declined to reduce interest rates. To do so, its spokesman asserted, would in no wise affect unemployment. Unemployment is "structural" in origin, it has nothing to do with deficient demand, its level will not respond to lower interest rates. It is attributable to a labor market that is too rigidly regulated and to a social insurance system too protective of income. Far-reaching reforms of labor market institutions are required, not monetary-policy tinkering.

The German central bank's argument is not new; it has been put forward by other central banks, including the U.S. Federal Reserve, ever since the inception of quasi-Keynesian macroeconomic policies in the early 1960s. Keynesian policies were adopted to address anemic economic growth and relatively high unemployment by means of tax cuts and deficit spending. The central banks, however, feared the inflationary consequences, and this is their continued fear as guardians of financial values. For them, as for most economists, the regulative principle of the economy is price (and wages are of course the "price" of labor), and price presumably adjusts so as to clear the market. Unemployment thus cannot ever be "Keynesian"; it is "structural," a term that encompasses notions of wage "rigidity" and the failure of unemployed workers to "adjust" to economic change. Unemployment is the fault of the unemployed. Flexibility of wages, deregulation of labor markets (that is, dispensing with long vacations, severance pay that seems too high, jobless benefits that replace too high a proportion of earnings) would facilitate "adjustment."

Labor market deregulation—the presumed need to adjust earlier gains of working people downward—has dominated questions of employment policy since the late 1970s. In the United States as well as in other member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), its salience remains undiminished, all the more so as resources for the welfare state's social benefits tighten. Its success in the United States and the United Kingdom cannot be doubted. Low-wage work has proliferated; currently, it is promoted by welfare "reform." "The share of male workers (working full time the year round), earning $15,000 and under, increased dramatically between 1979 and 1995," writes the Council of Economic Advisers in its February 1997 report. In 1967, a male full-time, year-round worker with a high school education averaged 77 percent of the earnings of a worker with college education; in 1995, he averaged only 58 percent. Though the minimum wage has been raised in recent years, "even these raises will not restore the purchasing power of the minimum wage to its 1981 level." It is true that the Earned Income Tax Credit, in combination with the higher minimum wage, has lifted many people out of poverty; at present, some eighteen million families receive this credit. But we know that poverty is parsimoniously defined in the United States. A better definition would fix a family's subsistence income at no less than two-thirds of the median family income, which is around $27,000 currently. Possibly one-fourth to one-third of all families with one or more members in the workforce have incomes lower than that.

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The United States is held up as the outstanding example of the success of a deregulated—or nearly unregulated—employment policy. In its *Jobs Study*, the OECD urges that the "market-clearing role" of wages be emphasized by European governments as well. Thereby the oversupply of labor, as manifested by high unemployment, would be lessened. It is a prescription for depressing wage levels. Labor has sought since the early post-World War II years to link the trend in real hourly compensation to the trend in productivity (the efficiency with which total output, as measured by the Gross Domestic Product [GDP], is produced). In fact, compensation has lagged behind productivity gains since the early 1980s in the United States, the gap widening year after year, reflecting the growing power of capital to shift the terms of trade with labor in its own favor. It will not soon be possible to halt this shift.

The *Jobs Study* approves of the growing wage dispersal (inequality of earnings) in the United States. European collective bargaining agreements resist such dispersal and pursue a solidaristic wage policy. In much of continental Europe, these agreements are binding even on firms not signatories to them. OECD's advocacy of greater wage dispersal to stimulate more employment would erode such centralized bargaining—which has protected the living standards of the weaker strata of the work force.

In some OECD countries, particularly the United States but also the United Kingdom, collective bargaining and trade unions have been targeted so as to intensify labor market competition. Trade union density has declined as a consequence; the decline accounts for 25 percent of the increase in wage inequality. In addition, unionized employers are exposed to greater labor cost competition, causing them to resist union demands and unorganized firms to balk at unionization.

OECD maintains that legislated employment security provisions discourage dismissals, hence also cause reluctance to hire new workers. Implicitly, it favors, or comes close to favoring, the "at will" hiring and firing practices prevalent in the United States. These practices have undoubtedly helped to moderate wage claims, thus also making workers more "flexible." In fact, in formulating monetary policy, the Federal Reserve takes account of the *sense of insecurity* the practice creates. Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve, has stated that "in 1991, at the bottom of the recession, a survey of workers at large firms . . . indicated that 25 percent feared being laid off. In 1996, despite the sharply lower unemployment rate and the tighter labor market, the same survey organization found that 46 percent were fearful of a job layoff."

Greenspan believes that rapid technological change has been the chief impetus underlying corporate downsizing and restructuring. Technological change, spelling greater output per unit of worker input, has always given rise to workers' fear of displacement. Heightened insecurity, however, relates to the much more rigorous application of the "at will" practice, which corporate firms, encouraged by the deregulatory, free-market ethos preached by government, now enforce. Downsizing and restructuring are not clearly linked to rapid technological change. They are far more clearly linked to the compulsions exerted by intensifying global competition. As we will see, they represent the private parallel to current public employment policy—the coldly calculated "adjustment" of the workforce, or large parts of it, to the pressures of worldwide competition.

The key fact about the situation of working people today is their widening exposure to the international division of labor. The extent of this exposure is shown by the growth in the volume of world trade, by the changes in its composition, and by the geographical shifts it has undergone. Between 1950 and 1984, worldwide production rose by a factor of five; the volume of foreign trade, by a factor of nine. Since the early 1980s, world trade has continued to rise at twice the rate of output. Trade in manufactures has soared, at the expense of trade in agricultural products and raw materials. The developed countries still account for the lion's share of trade in manufactures; yet such trade accounted for 43 percent of the exports of South and Southeast Asia in 1970, and for 78 percent in 1990; for 11 percent of those in Latin America

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in the earlier year, for 31 percent in the later.

Some economists, Paul Krugman among them, have tended to dismiss the impact of foreign trade upon the United States economy. It is hard to see why. In 1996, total foreign trade (exports plus imports) represented the equivalent of one-quarter of total output here, as against little more than one-tenth in 1970. In price-deflated terms, foreign trade tripled over the period; total output only doubled.

It has also been argued that a large proportion of workers in the industrial countries—up to 70 percent—engage in "non-tradable" activities, such as health care, construction, and services. Working conditions in such industries are nonetheless affected by such trade-related factors as the displacement of workers owing to import competition—all the more so as U.S. imports have exceeded exports by substantial amounts year in, year out since the late 1970s. Those conditions are affected further by immigration, which, like trade, links the United States to global labor markets.

Foreign trade and investment have been driven by competitive pressures that have intensified since the 1970s, in large part because of weakening economic growth rates in the industrial countries. (In the United States, the rate of growth of the real GDP dropped by more than half between the 1960-1972 and 1990-1996 periods, to an average annual rate of 2 percent.) Expansionary opportunities, however, opened up or were created abroad:

- in Latin America (including Mexico), import substitution policies as economic development paths foundered on the shoals of excessively high costs and debt burdens;
- the "structural adjustment" policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, pressing for privatization of state-run enterprises and for export-based economic growth, engendered foreign investment and the trade associated therewith;
- the ultimately successful General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations have continually lowered tariff and non-tariff barriers, and, perhaps more important now, are facilitating access to foreign investment under the same rules that govern domestic investment—a significant advantage to foreign investors, who are often more powerful than domestic investors in developing countries.

The institutionalizing of international trade and investment rules has undoubtedly strengthened, if not ensured, the dominance of capital, and reduced risk. This is not to imply that all is smooth sailing; the institutions themselves come under pressure from noncapitalist sources. But they reinforce the trend toward globalization of business and labor markets.

Foreign trade is conducted mostly by multinational enterprises (MNEs) whose profitability derives not least from the multicountry scale on which they operate. Foreign trade is fueled by foreign direct investment in plant and equipment, which has risen more rapidly than trade. As of the early 1990s, an estimated 40,000 companies owned or controlled 171,000 foreign affiliates. The nonfinancial MNEs employed seventy million workers in 1992, 20 percent of the nonfarm OECD labor force. Relations of ownership do not fully describe global business networks. "Strategic alliances" between firms, often themselves competing, together with subcontracting agreements, add to networks of "integrated production systems. . . . The value of sales of the foreign affiliates of MNEs now exceeds that of conventional arm's-length trade," writes the International Labor Office (ILO) in a recent report, *World Employment*. According to Edward M. Graham, writing in *Global Corporations and National Governments*, intrafirm trade by MNEs accounted for almost 50 percent of U.S. exports and well over 50 percent of U.S. imports of merchandise in 1991. In the six years since, the proportions have unquestionably increased.

These developments have heightened international competition. Business today is conducted in a world of diminishing transportation and communications costs, financial-center controls over excessive foreign-exchange fluctuations, ample availability of capital, and ease of acquiring technological know-how. Competition, however, also makes for overcapacity, particularly in the more mature, capital-intensive industries. (The chairman of General Motors has remarked that his firm invests in China because of market saturation in the industrial countries.)

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The latency of overcapacity, together with the shrinking half-life of innovation and technical know-how on which the viability of MNEs hinges, are perhaps the major causes of restructuring and downsizing. What does this mean for working people?

Let us consider some candid remarks made last year by the executive vice president of General Electric, Frank P. Doyle. (He spoke as part of a commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the 1946 Employment Act, at Bard College.) His essential message was "that one cannot think in static work-force terms in a dramatic and fast-changing market." Competition rapidly erodes what he termed the "proprietary advantages" of capital, ideas, and resources, making it impossible to maintain a "protected position" for long unless the best product can be offered for the best price. "What did we do? We downsized. . . . And we outsourced." Over the preceding fifteen-year period, G.E. had cut its direct employment from 435,000 persons to 215,000, that is, by more than one-half, even as its sales revenue nearly tripled. Paralleling such downsizing was outsourcing—turning to outside suppliers because "low-end and low-skill jobs . . . could be purchased more cheaply than . . . internally." "Outsourcing was in many ways the most critical piece of understanding" at which G.E. arrived in its restructuring effort. In earlier years, "large corporations were overpaying low-end workers and underpaying high-end workers," resulting in a leveling of compensation unrelated to skill or to "the true market value at which people were producing." That has ended. There are now "lots of people at the lower end who no longer find those convenient jobs at General Motors, U.S. Steel, and G.E. . . ."

G.E. ranked fifty-fifth among the top two hundred global corporations in 1995 sales. Its practice of outsourcing represents a kind of vertical *dis*integration that preserves core skills and jobs and farms out lower skills and standardized work to a periphery (or network) of supplier and service firms. Bennett Harrison, who thoroughly analyzes this development in his superb book *Lean and Mean: The Changing Landscape of Corporate Power in the Age of Flexibility*, cites an Italian economist who has described it as "decentralized Fordism," exemplified by the management style of Benetton. Benetton combines "high-level design and development work in northern Italy with outsourced production in tiers of small suppliers, some of them sweatshops scattered around southern Europe."

This core-periphery phenomenon, to be sure, has existed since the beginnings of industrial capitalism but was not central to corporate enterprise organization (vertical integration predominated); it has become common practice since the 1970s. It can prevail, however, only in the presence of a large, low-wage labor force, largely non-union, with minimal social regulation of wages and benefits. Such a labor force has also been available since the beginnings of industrialism. But the network structure of global corporations has more deeply polarized the workforce between relatively well-paid skilled and professional workers and low-skilled, less educated, poorly paid workers, who are often employed on a contingent, part-time, or temporary basis. The much increased inequality of earnings and incomes that has been documented since the late 1970s attests to this labor market dualism.

Labor market dualism is replicated throughout the employment structures of industry. According to ILO studies (which, like other official labor statistics, do not use the concept), one-seventh of the workers in the OECD countries were employed part-time in the late 1980s; more than three-quarters of them worked in the service sector. A large retail chain in the United Kingdom cut two thousand full-time jobs, and created three thousand part-time jobs in the early 1990s. It has been forecast that by the year 2000 more than half of all service jobs in the United Kingdom will be filled by part-time workers. In Germany, in France, and in Spain, temporary contract (fixed-term) work has proliferated. These forms of employment are termed "non-standard," meaning that "the employment relationship is not governed by the standards concerning wages and working conditions and social security that apply to persons in full-time

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employment" (Ana Romero in *Multinationals and Employment*). Part-time workers are far less likely to be covered by pension or health plans than full-time workers; female workers have even less chance to be covered than their male counterparts.

Labor market dualism also partially explains the low unemployment rate in the United States. That rate has indeed run about half as high as in continental Europe. It has given rise to much praise of the American "job machine," but such praise is misguided.

First of all, low unemployment here has been accompanied by low productivity advance. Only about one-fourth of economic growth since 1973 is attributable to rising productivity (output per hour of real GDP); the other three-quarters of growth has arisen from employment increases. Over the preceding post-World War II span, productivity improvement accounted for more than half of a much more vigorous growth rate. True, there has not been "jobless growth" over the past twenty-five years. But low productivity growth is linked to stagnant real wages, and would seem to be symptomatic of barriers to broader social development, such as a decent distribution of income, a higher level of public services, and so on.

Second, on the labor market demand side, employers are able to hire low-wage workers for activities that were once the province of households or of voluntary entities. The enormous spread of fast-food restaurants has been made possible (and necessary) by the expansion of the female workforce, as well as by family disintegration attested by such data as high divorce rates. The expansion of commercialized leisure and recreation enterprises likewise depends on the availability of youth and other low-wage workers. The non-wage costs associated with such workers are evidently low. For example, in 1987, only 28 percent of male service workers on part-time schedules were covered by health insurance, and only 17 percent of female workers. (The situation is unlikely to have improved since, considering that more than forty million persons, many of whom are working, remain uninsured.)

Third, on the labor market supply side, a reason for the low unemployment rate in the United States has been the relatively brief duration of unemployment benefits and the low percentage of the unemployed actually entitled to receive them (40 percent). Together with the virtual absence of any other income support entitlement, this has kept long-term unemployment to a very small proportion of the jobless. In Germany and France the maximum benefit duration runs to twelve and thirty months respectively, and is followed where needed by an indefinite period of unemployment assistance. Such entitlement, however, also makes for longer spells of unemployment; in 1989, close to half of the unemployed in the two countries had been without a job for at least a year (the proportion was higher in the early 1990s). Although the wage replacement rate of these benefits is low in France, and little more than half in Germany, their duration permits the recipient to resist economic and administrative pressures to take an unsuitable job. "Suitability" has informed the rules of unemployment compensation since its inception in the OECD countries in the 1930s and 1940s. These rules are increasingly rejected as breeding the disincentives that contribute to the labor market "rigidities" abhorred by all who would make wages more competitive and so ensure a large supply of low-wage workers.

It would be foolhardy indeed, however, to ignore the costs that unemployment imposes on welfare-state programs, on the use of tax revenue for public investment, and on resources for other social needs. According to a White Paper by the European Commission, "statutory charges on labor"—the sum of income taxes and social security contributions (which include unemployment tax) in the European Union rose from 34 percent of GDP in 1970 to 40 percent in 1991; in the United States they increased from 29 to 30 percent. One-tenth of these charges go to the support of the unemployed. And of course they do not reflect the revenue forgone from the losses of production and income due to unemployment."

Labor market regulation has been modified somewhat in continental Europe, and drastically so in the United Kingdom. As noted, in both

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areas, nonstandard workers have proliferated. Nonetheless, the American deregulatory model remains unacceptable. Neither the "downward widening of the scale of wage costs" nor "a reduction in all other costs associated with taking on or maintaining labor, e.g., social security rules . . . is actually possible in the European economic and social context," writes the European Commission. The traditions and politics of social democracy resist adoption of the American "model." More fundamentally perhaps, neither in Europe nor in the United States has labor market deregulation boosted the rate of economic growth or productivity. Rather, it has been a prescription for worker immiseration, uneasily balanced by such subsidies as the Earned Income Tax Credit. The proposed answer to the problem, more definitively formulated by the European Commission and the ILO than in the United States, is to accelerate economic growth.

Such acceleration is impeded by the factors that brought about the slowdown in growth in the first place; it is hard to see why they would not persist. We note some of them briefly.

Job creation in growing industries other than service industries has not been sufficiently rapid to absorb redundant labor from declining industries or agriculture, as had occurred in the post-World War II decades. New technologies, moreover, have tended to curtail jobs: in U.S. manufacturing, for example, productivity rose at an average annual rate of 2.8 percent between 1960 and 1979, while employment grew at a rate of 1.2 percent. Between 1979 and 1995, however, while productivity rose at a rate of 3.1 percent per year, employment *declined* by close to 1 percent annually. This pattern repeats in many goods-production industries (and strikingly so in agriculture). It is due to slackened demand, which in turn largely attests to saturation, and, as noted, steers the expansionary drive of business into foreign markets.

Furthermore, the "comparative advantage" that industrial countries presumably enjoy in "high-tech" equipment over less developed ones has been narrowing. For example, equipment embodying information and communications technologies now represents 25 percent of Thailand's exports; 22 percent of South Korea's; 28 percent of Japan's. Such equipment, moreover, is produced in factories boasting the latest design and efficiency standards. Thus, such growth industries cannot generate the additional domestic employment that was expected of them.

The "Uruguay Round" of GATT negotiations, as its stipulations come into full force, will result in a one-third decline in light-industry employment in the United States, according to a study published by ILO. This further diminishes the demand for less-educated workers, but there is an additional job displacement factor. U.S. firms affected by textile imports have been installing labor-saving equipment, so that productivity, for example in woven fabrics, doubled between 1972 and 1994 even as employment fell by half.

Service (or non-goods-producing) industries currently account for 70 percent of employment in the United States. Many of these industries, for example, telephone communications and banking, are reducing employment as they automate, introduce self-service, and consolidate. However, while the capacity of some of these industries to absorb redundant or newly entering workers is becoming more limited, the expansionary potential of others hinges on the availability of a workforce compelled by its social situation and educational level to work at very low wages. The *Washington Post* (March 21, 1997) reports that 90 percent of the employees of Levi Strauss earn $8 per hour or less; as do 80 percent of employees of Marriott International, Hyatt Hotels, and McDonald's; 65 percent of employees of ConAgra Foods; and 60 percent of employees of J.C. Penney. Back office workers and customer representatives of such large insurance companies as Aetna, as well as of commercial banks, earn $10 per hour or less. Some of these companies, the *Post* reports, pride themselves on helping employees fill out forms for the Earned Income Tax Credit, thus relying on the public purse to sustain their low-wage policies.

Indisputably, more rapid economic growth would tighten labor markets and diminish the availability of low-wage and contingent workers. In continental Europe, it would undoubtedly reduce unemployment. It is quite unlikely,

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however, that the monetary authorities would tolerate the necessary policies; nor is there any chance that fiscal policy will reverse the retreat of government from active macroeconomic intervention or undertake the large-scale public investment called for by people on the left. The monetary authorities, avatars of resistance to the redistributional effects of full employment, keep interest rates at levels that require enormous proportions of public budgets, here and abroad, to be expended on interest payments. High interest rates also defeat the income- or investment-supporting effects of budgetary deficits. The dear dollar or mark or franc attracts imports; the added income generated by deficits partially "leaks" into the purchase of imported goods and services. Thus, imports, over the past fifteen to twenty years, have become part of the monetary authorities' struggle against domestic wage "inflation."

The ILO's recent *World Employment* reports implicitly polemicize against the notions of labor market rigidity and "structural" unemployment propagated by the OECD, the monetary authorities, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. They urge higher economic growth rates, not merely to reduce unemployment but to attain full employment—where all who are able to work and seek work will find it. The changed gender and occupational structure of the workforce must be taken into account; policies must be developed to deal with lessened employment security, eroding social protection, and labor market "flexibility." Yet, the obstacles to the ILO's case for full employment are shown in by a key passage in its latest (1996-1997) report: "[A]t the same time as the social dislocations caused by increasing international competition are rising, the capacity, and even perhaps the will, of governments to take such compensatory or ameliorative action is weakening. Globalization is being accompanied by a worldwide trend towards smaller government, manifested in reductions in public expenditure, lower taxes . . . and widespread deregulation of markets. . . ." Given this retreat, policies that spur economic growth, seek full employment, and strive to ensure income and employment security are unlikely to be adopted, since they require strong public action and a measure of governmental autonomy.

Hugh Heclo has written, "If there has been a direction to our century's struggle, it seems to have been mainly a question of expanding . . . inclusiveness, of assuming that more people matter and that they matter as equals in aspirations for social welfare." The priorities now being imposed by capital threaten to shatter this presumption of inclusiveness, which has lain at the base of democratic governments since at least the 1930s. The priorities of capital are thus a threat also to democratic government, and hence must be challenged. □

Sources will be furnished by the author on request. Write to him c/o *Dissent*, 521 Fifth Ave., Suite 1700, New York, N.Y. 10017.

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David Bromwich

DEMOCRACY, MERIT, AND PRESUMPTIVE VIRTUE

Modern democracy has long drawn much of its moral energy from the idea of a career open to talents, an idea that depends on a shared conception of merit. I take it that merit is always in one sense a fiction: we could not project its social meaning from the nature of what is good or worthy, since it depends on a whole system of adaptations, a common history of acts admired and sometimes produced, but not too easy to produce. Different societies enforce different versions of the idea; but we should not exaggerate this variety. A morality strongly invested with a belief in personal responsibility, and seeking to justify work or action toward a common end, will incorporate some version of merit. Unselfish pride in a job well done and done not just for oneself, is perhaps the most obvious feeling by which we can trace the force of the idea. The same pride forbids one's showing or selling work that does not meet an inward standard of worth, and we recognize that such a standard is itself the internalization of a common understanding. Merit as mere entitlement, a sort of badge or test score displayed in public that permits me to get something for myself, represents a debasement in two ways. It separates the meaning of merit from its evidence in works that benefit more than one person. And it shifts the range of application from conduct requiring and eliciting approval to a behavior whose value has been indexed before we enter the scene. I will be talking about merit in an older sense.

Some way back in the genealogy of the idea lies a sense of *election*, of a worth deeper than institutions can precisely reflect, which is a legacy of the radical Protestantism of the seventeenth century. The first person in literature who seems to be driven by merit, and characterized by an attachment to it, is Satan in *Paradise Lost*. I do not think Milton's judgment of this character is simple or without ambivalence. He is a heroic consciousness perverted to evil ends. It is right that he be defeated, and yet by the strength of his resolve he is associated, in the fable of the poem, with Adam and Jesus Christ, who are its genuine heroes. The word occurs in Satan's opening speech to Beelzebub, when they lie "rolling in the fiery gulf/ Confounded though immortal," and Satan says he will not cease from strife with God, for how can he repent "that fixt mind/ And high disdain, from sense of injur'd merit,/ That with the mightiest rais'd me to contend." Again when he first assumes his throne of royal state in Hell, we are told that "Satan exalted sat, by merit rais'd/ To that bad eminence; and from despair/ Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires/ Beyond thus high." Merit, or the belief that both one's abilities and one's deserts are ponderable, can be a motive for the greatest actions, including the greatest of wicked actions. The eminence or height of fame that comes from merit wrongly turned is a bad eminence.

There is a touch of doubt in the suggestion that Satan was turned by a sense of injured merit, as if he might be justified in supposing he had been insufficiently rewarded. Milton cannot be applauding this feeling whose cause is a jealousy of omnipotence and resentment at God's giving of preferment to God's son. Nevertheless we are shown that the feeling really does operate. The self-worth of a creature who *ought* to receive public recognition, but who anyway

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recognizes himself, will, as the poem develops, come to be associated with self-consciousness. The connection emerges in an apparently buffoonish moment of enormous psychological power, where Satan, disguised as a toad, is changed back to his fallen form by the prodding of Ithuriel's spear, at which, addressing this member of the squadron of angels patrolling Eden, "Know ye not then said *Satan*, fill'd with scorn,/ Know ye not mee? Ye knew me once no mate/ For you, there sitting where ye durst not soar;/ Not to know mee argues yourselves unknown." You do not know me because in Heaven I soared so far above you. And so I stand above you now, which is why you still do not know me: what I am I feel from within. Satan's private belief in his ability so coincides with his sense of public worth that his name has become to him another name for distinction.

I bring up this ambivalent characterization to recall that the idea of merit was by one of its earliest and most sympathetic observers supposed to be not free of dangerous satisfactions. In Satan it becomes the solitary motive of a self-confidence without faith. But it can also be a motive of action for those who have faith. Adam exemplifies that kind of justified confidence when, sacrificing himself, he chooses to enter the world of mortality and freedom rather than live without Eve. The succession in the moral progress of this story from the supernatural demon to the natural hero turns on a conversion and purification of pride. And it is just that conversion that a skeptic of the heroic virtues will believe is neither possible nor necessary. Hume, for instance, gives a mild and ameliorative definition to pride; for him, it is simply the sentiment we learn by reflection on ourselves as seen in others' eyes. Pride is always socialized and sociable and so he can move it from the column of vices to the virtues that assist common utility. How much good would we do if we did not think the result would be appreciated? Our minds, as Hume points out, generously solicit company to help us admire ourselves.

Where pride has thus become a gentle unmixed good, merit will be an acceptable but less interesting ideal, and Hume makes almost nothing depend on it. Merit, he thinks, is just our name for ascriptive virtue, and to learn its scope a philosopher need only ask "whether or not he should desire to have this or that quality ascribed to him, and whether such or such an imputation would proceed from a friend or an enemy." Hume sets himself against the radical Protestant view of these matters when he writes, concerning a theocracy in which rewards of power would be proportioned to inward virtue, that under such laws

> so great is the uncertainty of merit, both from its natural obscurity, and from the self-conceit of each individual, that no determinate rule of conduct would ever result from it; and the total dissolution of society must be the immediate consequence. Fanatics may suppose, *that dominion is founded on grace*, and *that saints alone inherit the earth*; but the civil magistrate very justly puts these sublime theorists on the same footing with common robbers, and teaches them by the severest discipline, that a rule, which in speculation, may seem the most advantageous to society, may yet be found, in practice, totally pernicious and destructive.

The complimentary phrases concerning an innate quality, by which divine-right theorists and puritan enthusiasts honor themselves and show their indifference to civil tranquility, are placed under interdiction and dispatched with impartial contempt.

The rival versions of merit that I have associated with Milton and Hume persist to the end of the eighteenth century. In their different ways, and sometimes, as in Jefferson, in a strange amalgam, they have a substantial share in the founding ideals of the American republic. Merit continues to imply the sense of a reward properly belonging to oneself from a sociable disposition that issues in public benefits. At the same time it is a word for a faith deeper and less traceable than any of its possible effects. Both elements have proved enduring, in the democratic understanding of merit, though when one is in view we tend to forget the other. We are either too certain that all its good depends on a service to common utility, or too tenacious of the natural virtue we think it can describe regardless of its social bearings. Merit anyway for us has become a fiction perpetually ratified, a human creation that may be as necessary as the fiction of

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just punishment. None of us can conceive of wanting to live in a society utterly liberated from these beliefs. Indeed, merit holds a high position among the ideal goods that allow democracy to operate without being overwhelmed by resentment. Tocqueville saw without saying in quite these words that merit is the republican cure for the diseases most prevalent in a democratic morality. The idea of an aristocracy of talent flatters the mood of equality by permitting access to be potentially open everywhere, but it tames the envy this mood may incite by admitting, to the different walks of honor, sufficiently small numbers to assure that admission feels like a privilege. This hint of republican irony about the manners of democracy has begun to sound like an argument from Burke; and I want to turn now to an observation of moral psychology that runs through his later writings.

In a well-known passage of the *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke remarks that a country ought to honor its men of talent if it hopes to survive, and yet the way to distinction ought "not to be made too easy, or too much a thing of course." The Jacobins dealt bluntly with the small existing class of persons of real merit, and they dipped low in the social order when they constituted the *tiers état* from professions like that of tallow chandler or hairdresser. Such people, Burke wants us to agree, are likely to be too coarse by disposition and too limited in experience to be entrusted with much power in government. By eradicating from office and influence so many notable persons, the Jacobins denied themselves a significant provision of the talent they needed to govern. This part of the argument is familiar and I rehearse it only to bring into view the context for Burke's interesting terminology. Aristocrats, whom he believes to be a legitimate separate class of society, must, he says, be preserved among the compositional materials of government without any inquiry into their talent or want of talent. Burke refers to them as men of *presumptive virtue*. What we would call men or women of talent on the other hand—those who must have done something to deserve their status—he calls exemplars of *actual virtue*.

Oddly Burke appears to grant unquestioningly the claims of presumptive virtue, while he endorses actual virtue, or merit, as a tactical necessity for a state that belongs to the system of modern Europe. He does not doubt that it is a necessity. His phrasing, where this distinction is first brought in, is remarkable for its balance and its lack of balance—intended balance I think, and real lack of balance, for he says, "There is no qualification for government but virtue and wisdom, actual or presumptive. Wherever they are actually found, they have, in whatever state, condition, profession, or trade, the passport of Heaven to human place and honor." Merit, to repeat, in his usage corresponds to actual virtue, and he seems committed to argue that actual virtue is inferior to presumptive virtue. We ought to take for granted the people we honor just for what they are (presumptive virtue). We ought to question, but finally to admit, the claim of those we honor for what they have done and can do (merit). Yet he returns emphatically in the next sentence to the reality that merit alone supports: "Wherever they are actually found. . . ." This should apply to both actual and presumptive virtue but the word "actually" moves our interest again to the side of the individual bearer of talent. Presumptive virtue is still included in the argument, by a quasi-official compunction, but it is sent out to pasture like those cattle Burke says the nobility resemble, who will go on chewing their cud forever. He himself belongs to the class of men of actual virtue, and though he wants to limit their power, and therefore his own, he cannot help indicating that their performance will shape the society that is coming, not only in France but in America and England.

As Burke makes clear, actual virtue or merit is naturally energetic, and its principles of action spring from pride. It is a quality of the ambitious and the aspiring. That is one reason why, in a society that does not want to be turned upside down, their rewards, though proportioned to their service, should be kept moderate and tempered by irony in the giver and receiver alike. The relevant part of the argument in the *Reflections* closes on this note. Yet Burke's tone is very different, and a different recognition is implied, when he turns back to the subject five years later in the *Letter to a Noble Lord*. Here merit, original merit, the merit he had associated with the

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merely expedient bearer of actual virtue, seems to have become the virtue that the individual mind can admire most sympathetically. Its representative is Burke himself, who takes this occasion to mount a defense of the disinterested virtue of his entire career. Meanwhile, presumptive virtue, the unearnable distinction of the born aristocrat, is here associated with the Duke of Bedford, a man who deserted his class to defend the French Revolution and an example, as Burke paints him, of the presence among the inert nobility of the democratic vice of ingratitude. Burke the man of actual virtue stands out in striking contrast against this unworthy beneficiary of presumptive virtue. He says of the zeal with which he has guarded the duke's way of life from the Jacobin threat: "I have done all I could to discountenance their inquiries into the fortunes of those, who hold large portions of wealth without any apparent merit of their own. I have strained every nerve to keep the Duke of Bedford in that situation, which alone makes him my superior." By the measured accuracy of his words Burke raises an inquisitive jealousy of presumptive virtue even as he personally assures the noble lord how hard he is defending against the real inquisitors elsewhere. He knows that the duke's fortune is in the nature of things, and yet he implies that the nature of things is kept as it is only by the exertions of men like him. As soon as inherited titles and voluntary acts are put in the same moral scale, presumptive virtue will be seen as buoyed up by actual virtue, and as existing only on its sufferance. Once merit has realized that it is necessary for the support of prescription, it has taken all but public ascendancy.

I think that Burke in this *Letter* recognizes how far his irony has carried him, and that he is on the side of individual merit as distinct from, and not just as analogous with, inherited honor, whether he likes the fact or not. But the truth is that he relishes the contrast: "It would not be gross adulation, but uncivil irony, to say, that he [the duke] has any public merit of his own to keep alive the idea of the services, by which his vast landed pensions were obtained. My merits, whatever they are, are original and personal; his are derivative." Burke ought to be able to say these words with humility, knowing his audience would take the derivative virtue to be superior. But he says them surely in a triumph of pride: better to have qualities that are original and personal. Maybe it is a dubious modern habit and, as Burke would have said in another mood, a vice to pique yourself on an attainment that is only individual. But this sense of self-worth once it has got into the world cannot be subdued. Burke does not escape its influence any more than Milton's Adam does when he follows a path of rebellion that becomes unselfish. The trait is fostered by aristocratic society, but it is stronger than aristocracy. It is the form of legitimate virtue that comes to prevail in a democratic society, but it is proof against assaults by the leveling command of democracy.

Let me shift to the present time. For it was the thought that this contest is still with us, that we know today the tension between merit and presumptive virtue, that prompted me to trace some far-off episodes of its history. I hope it will not need much defense to assert that merit and the conviction of its importance is still with us. We see it in athletes, we see it in artists, we see it among ourselves, in our responses to the talents we admire either familiarly or at a distance. The idea that it cannot belong to politicians—that they of all people are undifferentiated and exchangeable—is a delusion that will pass if our government is to survive. Presumptive virtue is still with us too. No longer does it take the form of aristocratic titles. Its beneficiaries include by definition all who gain a large part of their worldly tenure by birth and not by voluntary effort. We defer to the idea when we agree not to contest the privilege of the alumni child admitted to a good school, the scion of a fortune in big business, the imitator of an established parental example in any of the professions. But our avowed morality—and in this we are descendants of the nonconformist Milton and not the quietist Hume, of the iconoclastic Burke of the *Letter to a Noble Lord* and not the aristocratic Burke of the *Reflections*—inclines as none before ever did to the side of original and personal merit. We accept those whose virtue is presumptive, but we do so with irony and the irony is now directed the other way, against the exist-

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ing title that is associated with aristocracy. We favor now instead an implicit acceptance of the claim once linked with upstart merit. All the leading affections of our political and imaginative literature are turned that way, and it would be easier to start a revolution than to try to reverse their course.

The skepticism we share about presumptive virtue is plain in the reaction that sets in as soon as someone tries to invent it in a new shape. Consider the resentment that has gathered over the years against the policy of affirmative action. The virtue designated by this policy is presumptive in that it refers to what you are and not what you have done. The sentiment of merit may cooperate with equality—it is against accepting any inequality merely because it is given—but it remains agnostic about the distributive equality that affirmative action was designed to answer to. The advocates of the policy took no stock of these facts of morale when they devised a plan that, for the sake of a projected long-run good, temporarily overrode the claims of merit. That it did not override merit in theory is beside the point, for people grow quickly enough attuned to the texture of a widespread practice. The movers of affirmative action saw eventually that its work would be more effectual if people could be converted from the belief in "original merit" to a belief in fairness, both distributive and what might be called reparative fairness, beside which merit would appear as a now discarded simplification. The attempt to discredit the older belief was only occasionally explicit. The chief persuasive strategy of the new policy was to change the subject. The good of filling a job in a workplace had partly to do with merit but that was something we need not talk about. It had more to do with fairness at present and the remedy of past unfairness.

This logic is still going strong in an ad that ran in the *New York Times* on April 7, 1996, with twenty-eight initial signatures followed by hundreds of others. "Affirmative action builds democracy" was the lead, and below it one read that "Affirmative action works toward eliminating centuries of racial and gender discrimination in jobs and schooling," that it "advances fairness, not favoritism," that it "brings us all closer to a more democratic, just workplace," and that it "helps narrow the gap in salaries, employment, and education endured by minorities and women." Notice that only one word in all these statements, the detail against favoritism, plainly incorporates the liberal idea of merit. The appeal against discrimination may also be read as broadly liberal, egalitarian, and merit-centered: to put it into practice might lead to the sort of fairness now designated in rules of "comparable worth." And yet this appeal is mixed, very uneasily, with the suggestion that such a policy must serve as a remedy of past injustices. One can see the peculiar blend in the sentence that brings together the good of equalizing salaries and a mention of the past discrimination that women and minorities have endured. The last word is indicative: the policy is righting the wrongs *endured* by certain people, and the reward they ought to be given is due from a condition they have *inherited*. An aristocrat inherited a prescription that sufficed to establish a title—his status was presumed by a history of privilege. The status of the new beneficiary is presumed by a history of deprivation.

I conclude with a judgment and a psychological observation. The judgment is that nobody interested in the preservation and reform of our society would today want to widen affirmative action even if that were politically possible. The spur to a fierce contest of resentments would be too great. On the other hand, someone interested in fomenting civil fury might well seek to destroy affirmative action programs altogether. It was very late, in the 1960s and 1970s, to be planting a new strain of presumptive virtue in a social order like ours, but the policy is of almost thirty years' standing, and no conservative wants to tamper with a policy that has brought some satisfaction and little misery. A liberal order can accept an acknowledged practice of presumptive virtue when the acceptance is tempered by irony, and this is so whether its index points to the past as a glorious or as a wretched inheritance. But the allowances for such a gesture are, and in a morality of merit they ought to be, circumscribed, since we are interested in actions and services that are not

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derivative. Only in a monarchical or a revolutionary regime could a form of presumptive virtue be supposed primary and its affirmation desirable. In a liberal order like ours, the prudent management of present interests for the good of the whole society is the only unquestionable directive of authority. To the extent that minorities claim membership in this whole, they will want to be judged as individuals, and they will not scorn such ideas as merit or character or responsibility. In fact, the theoretical scorn for these ideas, and especially for merit, has been a tactic in the advocacy of affirmative action only among academics.

Still, it might be said the common good is just what the architects of affirmative action did have in view. How then does the innovator in presumptive virtue differ from the citizen who takes his stand on actual virtue or merit? The difference has to do with distinct intuitions about the nature of talents and the way talents do or do not belong to an individual. John Rawls said in *A Theory of Justice* that "it seems to be one of the fixed points of our considered judgments that no one deserves his place in the distribution of native endowments, any more than one deserves one's initial starting place in society. The assertion that a man deserves the superior character that enables him to make the effort to cultivate his abilities is equally problematic; for his character depends in large part upon fortunate family and social circumstances for which he can claim no credit." On the face of it this intuition of our "considered judgments" seems to go merit one notch better by taking *nothing* as given. If egalitarian fairness is our sole concern, then personal abilities or gifts, which Rawls calls "assets" so as to treat them on an analogy with property, are indeed givens and as much in violation of an ideally constructed fairness as any title or estate could be.

But in attacking the idea of actual virtue, under a mask of indifference very like the mask Burke had worn against presumptive virtue, it seems to me that Rawls failed to do justice to the inveteracy of a common belief. It really is not one of the fixed points of our considered judgments that character should be ranked among the accidents of circumstance, and be treated as an impersonal good. That it is partly an accident no sane person doubts. Yet the morality of merit looks on character as an irreducible good because it is intimately connected with self-respect, and you cannot have self-respect regarding something of which only the contingency and never the pride of association is present to mind. We still grant our rewards largely on trust, but the residence of trust has changed. Even when we know a good to be in some way derivative, we feel more sure of its worth when we bring to mind the ways in which it is original and personal. No policy that fails to reckon with the power of this belief can ever gain in credit what it has lost in faith. □

To Our Contributors

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(1) Be sure to keep a copy of your manuscript. And please remember that we can't return articles unless they're accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

(2) Please don't write to ask whether we're interested in such and such an article—it makes for useless correspondence. Look at our last few issues to see if your idea fits in. Or take a chance and send us your article. We will not consider manuscripts submitted simultaneously to several publications.

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THE EDITORS □

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Morris Dickstein

THE ARTIST AND THE CITIZEN

Meyer Schapiro's Values

With the death of Meyer Schapiro in 1996, the art world lost a legendary figure while the rest of us, including the *Dissent* community, were deprived of a valued colleague, teacher, and model. Schapiro's life and work touched several different worlds. As a charismatic teacher whose passion and erudition were astonishing, he trained generations of art historians and opened the eyes of others—students, artists, intellectuals—to the visual field around them. He was a pioneer in the study of both Romanesque art, the subject of his 1929 Columbia dissertation, and impressionist painting, to which he devoted some of his most trenchant lectures and essays. Unlike most historical scholars, he was keenly involved with contemporary art as a mentor to young painters. An independent Marxist in the 1930s, he brilliantly explored the social history of art but also, in his writing for *Art Front* and other left journals, threw himself into the political struggles of the period, supporting the formation of the Dewey commission that investigated Moscow's charges against Trotsky.

His circle of friendship was immense. In the quarrelsome world of the New York Intellectuals, he was universally admired as "our genius." He had a close-up view of the shadowy world of Whittaker Chambers, his friend and Columbia contemporary, whom he later helped wean away from underground work for the Communist Party. A later friend was the equally Dostoyevskyan figure of poet Delmore Schwartz, whose inexorable descent into paranoia cut him off from nearly everyone else he knew. Equably steady and sane, Schapiro was drawn to people whose temperament was far more apocalyptic than his own.

For students at Columbia, the New School, and the New York Studio School, Schapiro was simply a great talker, a dazzling polymath, a high-wire performer who elevated classroom lectures and even ordinary conversation into an art form. Like Isaiah Berlin at Oxford, he seemed to have done very little writing, certainly no books, nothing except the out-of-the way article in the remote *Festschrift* or scholarly journal. All this changed in 1977 when George Braziller began publishing a four-volume selection of Schapiro's papers, which showed the larger world how much he had been writing all along and how little his work had dated. (Ironically, an equally momentous selection of Berlin's essays, also in four volumes, began appearing a year later.)

Neither Berlin nor Schapiro had ever been obscure; both had been renowned as lecturers and revered by their peers, and Berlin, in an unusual feat, had negotiated the slippery rungs of the British establishment without downplaying his Jewishness. Both were cosmopolitan figures who emerged from the ferment of the secularized Jewish intelligentsia between the wars, Berlin in his passage from Eastern Europe to depression-era Oxford, Schapiro within the Europe-oriented world of the New York Intellectuals. Grounded in philosophy, Berlin brought a literary verve and empathy to the history of ideas, focusing on the conflict between totalistic systems like Marxism, nationalism, or romanticism and the more skeptical traditions of liberalism. Schapiro developed an equally subtle dialectic between the seemingly closed world of medieval art, with its traditional

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religious iconography, and the more anarchic universe of modern art, marked by more individualized forms of self-expression.

As writers they take little for granted, constructing a subject from the ground up and bringing to it a level of reflection and scrutiny that seems permanently fresh. Very different minds, they resembled each other in bringing a rich sense of history to bear on contemporary issues, a practice that goes to the heart of what intellectuals do. One British reviewer of Berlin's most recent collection, *The Sense of Reality*, wrote of "his campaign to relate the great ideas of history to the way we live now" and his view of philosophy "not only as an intellectual discipline but also as an adventure profoundly integrated with the shaping of human affairs." Berlin's limpid accounts of the writers like de Maistre, Hamann, Vico, Marx, and the Russian social thinkers of the nineteenth century, like Schapiro's acute exploration of Romanesque sculptors and impressionist painters, are alive with the fundamental concerns of the moment. Their work traverses the whole arc of how modern culture has made us who we are.

If Berlin, like Raymond Aron in France, tried to turn intellectuals from overarching systems like Marxism toward pluralism, Schapiro, more like the theorists of the Frankfurt school, synthesized an iconoclastic Marxism with a modernist conception of the artist. In Schapiro's version, the artist embodied qualities like autonomy, spontaneity, sensuousness, and emotional generosity that were socially endangered under modern conditions. Thus the artist became the paradigm of an ideal of human freedom first theorized by the Enlightenment, then embraced but too often betrayed by Marxists and radical reformers of every stripe. These were also values cherished by John Dewey, Schapiro's senior colleague at Columbia, in both his social thought and educational philosophy. Schapiro, from a cosmopolitan Jewish starting point but by a much-different route, thus arrived at the same intensely committed liberalism as Berlin's.

But this is far too general. Schapiro's reputation cannot long survive on memories of his lectures or his personal presence, but only through texts that he, like Berlin, was so wary of publishing. Despite that hesitation, which seemed so careless of public approbation, many of Schapiro's essays have justifiably become classics. What exactly is a Schapiro essay like? Here the divergence from Berlin is striking. Where Berlin approaches a historical problem (like nationalism) or the work of an individual thinker (like Herzen) in sweeping narrative terms, deftly encapsulating a man or an era in a few pages, Schapiro will often approach an artist like Van Gogh, Picasso, or Chagall through a single work or, in cases like Cézanne or Courbet, through one recurrent motif. Ever the critic, Schapiro is steeped in the particular as the ground for generalizations about form, genre, theme, historical period, and the individual artist's career. Where Berlin brilliantly illuminates the context, Schapiro demands close attention to the visual text—a habit of exact observation that he treasures in painters and thinkers alike. He sets the turning point of Cézanne's career, for example, when he overcame certain inhibitions and passed "from the painting of fantasies to the discipline of observation." This became part of Schapiro's own credo as a critic. (When Jacques Derrida, in a self-indulgent dialogue called "Restitutions," attacked him for seeking some elusive "truth" in painting, Schapiro, who had pinpointed Heidegger's mystification of a Van Gogh painting, replied that he was merely a humble scholar trying to establish accurately what he saw.)

The first thing we notice in a Schapiro essay is the mixture of vast erudition and extraordinary simplicity of style. Where most theorists use specialized language as a matter of professional pride (or deformation), as if to distinguish their ideas from common-sense rambling, Schapiro's more direct approach, founded on lecturing and conversation, aims to democratize learning and make it more accessible. This plain style, as it moves inexorably from point to point, can strike a kind of terror in the reader. Schapiro habitually compresses into a perfectly lucid paragraph what other writers would develop over the course of a book—as when, in a brief essay on Diderot's art criticism, he summarizes the transition from rococo to classicism in 18th-century art. Among his papers on mod-

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ern art there are some lovingly crafted essays on Cézanne, less than three pages each, that detonate from sentence to sentence with the quiet intensity of prose poetry.

Schapiro's identification with Cézanne is so great that he can distill a lifetime of reflection into a handful of sentences. His understated effects as a writer seem modeled on the subtle brushstrokes he admires in the painter:

> He is arresting through his images—more rich in suggestive content than has been supposed—and also through his uninterpreted strokes which make us see that there can be qualities of greatness in little touches of paint. . . . Out of these emerges a moving semblance of a familiar natural world with a deepened harmony that invites meditation.

Writing in 1959, when abstract expressionism still commanded the New York scene and a formalist approach dominated the criticism of modern art, Schapiro typically moves through form toward the human configuration it expresses. The formal innovations of modern art—and the elusive content of some earlier art—had encouraged advanced critics to see all art in formal terms. Schapiro, on the contrary, anticipates virtually every strategy—the social, the psychoanalytic, the semiotic—that would take later critics beyond formalism. On Cézanne he looks forward to a time when "the personal content of this classic art" would "become as evident as the aesthetic result."

Schapiro was able to make good on this promise a decade later in a famous piece, "The Apples of Cézanne: An Essay on the Meaning of Still-life" (1968). In the earlier essay he had complained that "the lives of Gauguin and Van Gogh have blinded the public to what is noble and complete in Cézanne's less sensational, though anguished, career. . . . His art has a unique quality of ripeness and continuous growth. . . . He admitted to the canvas a great span of perception and mood, greater than that of his Impressionist friends." Schapiro's portrait of Cézanne as an artist who combines nobility and anguish, tentativeness and completeness, hints at the personal content of his own work. Compared to his contemporaries, with their more dramatic lives and spectacularly expressive canvases, Cézanne was like the tortoise to the hare. Schapiro, so bountiful in conversation, so reluctant to publish, clearly identified as much with Cézanne's reticence as with his steady growth and ultimate ripeness.

On one level, "The Apples of Cézanne" is Schapiro's bravura turn in the iconological mode of emigré art historians like Erwin Panofsky. It reads like a detective story, an intellectual adventure full of mystery and surprise. As Panofsky, deftly mobilizing a ingenious array of evidence, had unpacked the death-motif buried in the phrase *Et in Arcadia Ego*, Schapiro probes every valence of Cézanne's apples, from their formal properties, their domestic scale, and their sensual fullness to their resemblance to his own bald head, which he underlined in one striking sketch. Modernist critics had seen the apples as little more than a pretext, a "simplified motif" (in Lionello Venturi's words) that "gave the painter an opportunity for concentrating on problems of form." Schapiro instead concentrates on the apples, using them to construct both the nature of still-life and the elusive inner life of the painter.

> In reading the accounts of Cézanne by friends, I cannot help thinking that in his preference for the still-life of apples—firm, compact, centered organic objects of a commonplace yet subtle beauty, set on a plain table with the unsmoothed cloth ridged and hollowed like a mountain—there is an acknowledged kinship between the painter and his objects, an avowal of a gifted withdrawn man who is more at home with the peasants and landscape of his province than with its upper class and their sapless culture.

Here Schapiro himself does what he attributes to Cézanne, moving from attentive observation to meditation. With the providential word "sapless," his residual radicalism, his imaginative empathy, and his sensuous feeling for the object come together. For all his scholarship, Schapiro's work is lit up by flashes of insight that take your breath away. His criticism is at once empirical and speculative, boldly imagined yet carefully qualified. Like many postwar intellectuals, he shifted his ground from the social to the psychoanalytic, but without really leaving his Marxism behind.

Schapiro's essay portrays Cézanne as a painter constrained and anxious in his feelings

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about women, thwarted in his early efforts to paint nudes and tackle ambitious subjects, unable to match the rich sensory appeal of admired artists like Delacroix and Courbet—but finally an artist who fulfills himself by finding a limited scale, a muted technique, and a confined but endlessly varied subject that obliquely displays his full humanity. Cézanne triumphs by finding his way around the emotional blocks that hold him back, as Schapiro triumphs by revealing the tension and conflict behind Cézanne's apparently serene art.

Schapiro set the stage for this study of Cézanne with an earlier essay on the anxiety and blockage he found in Van Gogh's "Crows over the Wheat Field," painted only a few days before the artist killed himself. As he did with Cézanne, Schapiro excels at portraying an artist under emotional pressure yet somehow finding, for the moment at least, a profound aesthetic and personal solution. Schapiro shows how Van Gogh's painting, with its ominous images and foreshortened perspective, resonates with his emotional crisis, which it still manages to objectify, enabling it to resonate for the viewer as well. Like Lionel Trilling in his essay on "Art and Neurosis," Schapiro insists on the artist's "intense effort to control, to organize," to take firm hold of reality as he feels it slipping away from him. What others see as stylized or distorted in Van Gogh, Schapiro treats as witness to his "personal realism":

> The strong dark lines that he draws around trees, houses, and faces, establish their existence and peculiarity with a conviction unknown to previous art. Struggling against the perspective that diminishes an individual object before his eyes, he renders it larger than life. The loading of the pigment is in part a reflex of this attitude, a frantic effort to preserve in the image of things their tangible matter and to create something equally solid and concrete on the canvas.

Schapiro's feeling for the painting as physical object, intensified no doubt by his response to Jackson Pollock and other abstract expressionists, is as crucial as his sensitivity to the painter's accentuated realism and internal crisis. In another essay he describes how the impressionist painters' effort to render "the shapeless, diffused, unlocalized components of the landscape due to light and atmosphere" gave at the same time "a new tangibility and independence to the crust of pigment." The modernism that turned Clement Greenberg into a formalist made Schapiro a kind of realist, someone who sees paintings as experiences, expressive of the need and desire to take possession of the sensible world. This experiential approach also enables him to demonstrate "the humanity of abstract painting." For Schapiro, no successful representation is merely imitative and photographic, just as no pattern of abstraction is actually free of human content.

Schapiro belonged to no definable school of art criticism, had no methodology that could be passed on to students and epigones. His approach demands only a more alert seeing, enlightened by an exhaustive knowledge of the history of ideas, the history of visual representation, the lives of the artists, and the whole social matrix of art, including parallels with the other arts. A tall order, not easily filled without a lifetime of learning and an acute visual sensibility. Schapiro's nuanced approach, always infused with a sense of the present, explains the stark contrast between his work on medieval and on modern art. Writing about "the aesthetic attitude of Romanesque art," he becomes something of a formalist, seeing it less through its overt religious content than as an art "imbued with the values of spontaneity, individual fantasy, delight in color and movement, and the expression of feeling that anticipate modern art." In short, Schapiro looks at impressionist and abstract art in traditional terms as a way of rendering the world, a vessel of feelings and experiences, while finding in religious art some of the formal and creative independence intrinsic to modernism.

Schapiro's theoretical account of this tricky dance between form and content comes in an essay called "On Perfection, Coherence, and Unity of Form and Content" (1966), which should be widely read by critics in every field. It appears not in the much-discussed *Modern Art* volume of 1978, but in a more recent collection, *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society* (1994). If the modern volume is an as-

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semblage of art-historical classics, the theory volume includes many pieces whose impact has yet to be assimilated. The 1966 essay reads like a skeptical postmodern manifesto that undercuts all those terms of artistic unity so dear to formalist aesthetics, whether Kantian, Hegelian, or New Critical. The relation between form and content, he shows, is as malleable and inconsistent as the patterns within any complex work. Qualities like unity, perfection, or coherence that we love to apply to works of art are based only on the selection of features we perceive at the moment. They belong as much to the interpretive process as to the aesthetic object.

As Dr. Johnson said about Shakespeare (and Poe argued about any long poem), the more ambitious the work, the more likely it is to contain ruptures and inconsistencies. "Perfection, completeness, strict consistency are more likely in small works than large. The greatest artists—Homer, Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Tolstoy—present us with works that are full of problematic features," says Schapiro. "We cannot hold in view more than a few parts or aspects, and we are directed by a past experience, an expectation and a habit of seeing, which is highly selective." In other words, we bring our partialities and preconceptions, our habitual ways of seeing, to every act of critical observation. This is what makes new interpretations possible: they are based on "significant features overlooked by previous observers" and "an appeal to the freshly seen structure and qualities of the work."

With his customary balance and subtlety, Schapiro stops well short of a pervasive postmodern skepticism. The changing structures and qualities really do represent partial features of the work, not simply projections of the mind of the beholder. There *are* truths about art that can be established by the work of different scholars in a "collective criticism extending over generations." Always alert to contradictions, Schapiro saw scholarship as experimental and cumulative but also corrective. He showed how Freud misread da Vinci, how Heidegger mistook Van Gogh, each of them deflected by his own method and argument. When Heidegger saw in Van Gogh's shoes a sturdy pair of peasant shoes, he found what he needed to find. Schapiro respected the intellectual ambition that drove them to misappropriate art, but he also had a Deweyan skepticism about the quest for certainty, a post-Marxist's suspicion of the true believer. He shows how the work of interpretation, with its strong impulse toward unity, can only be provisional. It rests on an ideal of perception that is almost mystical, "a feeling for the pervasiveness of a single spiritual note or of an absolute consistency in diverse things," he says. "I do not believe that this attitude, with its sincere conviction of value, is favorable to the fullest experience of a work of art." Schapiro, I think, puts his finger on the theological grounding of German aesthetics, as postmodernists recoil from other totalizing narratives. He sees formalism as a secular mysticism that obscures the work of art by idealizing it.

Schapiro concludes his essay with a kind of credo that offers a modest and provisional pragmatism in place of the spiritual satisfactions of formalist art history. Like Isaiah Berlin's politics, Schapiro's aesthetics are tentative, collaborative, and skeptical rather than absolute:

> Critical seeing, aware of the incompleteness of perception, is explorative and dwells on details as well as on the large aspects that we call the whole. It takes into account others' seeing; it is a collective and cooperative seeing and welcomes comparison of different perceptions and judgments. It also knows moments of sudden revelation and intense experience of unity and completeness which are shared in others' scrutiny.

To me this sounds like the liberal outlook of John Stuart Mill, as expounded later by Berlin in *Four Concepts of Liberty*, but also like the experimental model of another of Mill's disciples, John Dewey. In old age Dewey consulted with Schapiro as he was completing his own treatise on aesthetics, *Art as Experience* (1934), a title that could be applied to Schapiro's criticism. But unlike the pragmatists, Schapiro could not quite relinquish the moments of ecstasy and revelation he associated with the other kind of critical writing. Even his skepticism is highly qualified.

A more oblique statement of Schapiro's own position can be surmised later in the theory volume when he follows his brief but incandescent essay on Diderot with a piece on the celebrated

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connoisseur Bernard Berenson. The latter article, which first appeared in *Encounter*, is surprising, since Schapiro rarely attacks anyone; Michael Kimmelman in his *New York Times* review described it as "unusually testy." In fact it is an anti-self-portrait, for Berenson, another immigrant Jewish boy from Lithuania, represents everything Schapiro had tried not to be. He had turned his back on his Jewish origins, failed to develop after his early books on Renaissance painting, and spent his life accumulating money and living well as an adviser to the rich. He had no sympathy to spare for the poor and the unwashed, disliked democracy, and, worse still, detested everything about modern art. "Its great liberty of spirit probably disturbed him," writes Schapiro. "He failed to see the seriousness of its leading masters and their finesse."

For Schapiro, Berenson represents the dead end of the aesthetic movement, the pursuit of beauty "separated from the ethical, the civic, and the religious and lifted above these as a self-sufficient private goal." But he senses an inner contradiction in Berenson's career, for what redeems him in Schapiro's eye is the labor and exacting discipline that went into his connoisseurship: "Without this core of work his personal culture would have been vapid and precious. Rather, he made of the knowledge of art, both historical and aesthetic, the object of an exacting effort with a public result." As a poor immigrant, he had to make his own way. Berenson's success was founded on commerce, on the marketplace, not simply on a quivering aesthetic receptivity. "Business, a distasteful, indelicate subject, was the concealed plumbing of his House of Life." Thanks to both his scholarly and practical bent, which the aesthete in him was loath to acknowledge, "his sensibility became the instrument of a profession."

Not long afterward, almost as a foil to his portrait of Berenson, Schapiro wrote a sketch of Diderot that has strong elements of a self-portrait. Where Berenson is saved only by his scholarship and professional discipline, Diderot is admired as a passionate and gifted conversationalist, too restless and responsive to develop his ideas in any systematic form, living at a time when both art and society were going through a tremendous transformation. Diderot embodied the freedom of spirit that was becoming the central value of his own age. A key theme in Schapiro's work, as represented in Diderot, is the parallel between the creative freedom of the artist and the social freedom of the individual, both of them emerging just as the power of church and aristocracy gave way to the new "public sphere" of the Enlightenment.

Unlike Berenson, "Diderot is so intensely concerned with artists not simply because he loves their paintings and sculptures. The artist is for him an example par excellence of the free man. . . . What Diderot says about the artist's freedom can be applied to the freedom of the citizen, which is a condition of the latter's dignity. In his warmth and spontaneity the artist is a model of the natural, productive, self-fulfilling man." Schapiro's idealized image of the artist as the autonomous individual, which influences his view even of medieval art, is exactly the point where his modernism and Marxism intersect.

As far back as his Marxist phase in 1937, when other left critics were attacking modern art for its bourgeois self-indulgence, Schapiro had maintained that impressionism, by turning nature into "a private, unformalized field for sensitive vision, shifting with the spectator, made painting an ideal domain of freedom." The very subjects of impressionist paintings, he suggested, the innumerable boating parties, picnics on the grass, and Sundays in the park, became the artists' way of using the leisure activities of the bourgeoisie for subversive ends, of emphasizing the principle of pleasure over restraint and responsibility. This argument about the utopian rather than regressive character of modern art would later be pursued more systematically by Frankfurt school writers like Adorno and Marcuse.

Though his interests turned in many directions, Schapiro at heart was a great expositor of modernism, perhaps the greatest we have had. In his mature work he substituted the modernist idea of constant upheaval and transformation for the Marxist faith in revolution, but many of the social values of Marxism remained with him, though they are hard to reconstruct from the

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volumes of his selected papers, which exclude his political writings. His remarkable essay on the 1913 Armory Show is virtually an inner history of modern art, which also explains sympathetically why the resistance to it was so strong. He showed how modernism had dethroned the hierarchy of subject-matter and moral uplift in art while renewing its social idealism, its ambition to change the world. From the viewpoint of modernism, he said, the artist was not only revolutionary, constantly remaking the whole idea of art, but ethical, because of the integrity of his individual vision.

Though he questioned everything else, Schapiro never questioned the modernist narrative of liberation, for he contributed so much to shaping and expounding it. He hardly touches the darker side of modernism, with its links to fascism and other forms of irrationalism, but his work on individual painters remains exhilarating. Schapiro identified so strongly with modern art because, unlike the social revolution in which he had invested his early hopes, it was still happening all around him. But he understood modern art in his own terms, which were personal yet also social. He saw even its neoprimitivism as a form of social criticism and individual expression. His essays on abstract art profoundly illuminate the human core of visual experiments that can seem private, perverse, arbitrary, or alien. He notes that the modernity embraced by the early avant-garde has grown problematic, and he occasionally reminds us of how much was lost in the turn away from figurative representation, but he also opens our eyes to the spiritual adventure of modern art, the depth of feeling, the unexpected beauty, and the personal power of what remains. □

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Marshall Berman

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Lure of 42nd Street

As the new Times Square takes shape, this is a good time to think about what's special about it, the ways in which we love it and hate it and love to hate it. Since the completion and convergence of several elevated and subway lines around the turn of the century, the square—even before it became *Times* Square (which it did with the opening of the New York Times Building at 1 Times Square in 1905)—has been a special kind of space. It became famous first for its hotels, restaurants, cafés, and cabarets, places where men and women could talk, smoke, drink, dance—to both new and old music—and have a good time together. Nothing like this existed in nineteenth-century America, where the lines between respectable and dissolute spaces were sharply drawn. From the very start, even when it was Longacre Square, Times Square seemed to exist to blur those lines.

One of the great New York novels, Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*, features a doomed love affair between respectable people who simply cannot find places to be alone together. There's got to be " 'Somewhere we can be alone,' he insisted." The lovers are speaking now from within a closed coach. "In New York?" The Countess Olenska laughs sadly, and defies Newland Archer to find a place they can be; alas, he can't. But that is in the 1880s. Within twenty years, the Times Square district would spawn a spectacular abundance of locations—all with private dining rooms above or below—where men and women could meet each other and be private in public space. These alluring, notorious places helped transform New York into what an angry moralist of the 1900s called "the capital of dangerous love."

A crucial ingredient in modern city life was *looking*: looking at other people, looking at yourself, looking at others looking at you. Baudelaire, Whitman, and two generations of Parisian painters had portrayed this as a central modern theme. Broadway in the 1900s developed a magical "look" that was supersaturated with mirrors, picture windows, and electric light. Ezra Pound wrote in 1910 that, thanks to electrification, New York was "the most beautiful city in the world in the evening." Buildings at night appear "immaterial," the spectator "sees but the lighted windows." In Pound's vision, "the great buildings lose reality and take on their magical powers." "Here is our poetry," he proclaimed, "we have pulled down the stars to our will."

But many people here were themselves pulled down:

"I'll just go down Broadway," he said to himself. . . ."

This is Edward Hurstwood, ex-lover of Theodore Dreiser's heroine *Sister Carrie* (1900), and one of America's classic victims of dangerous love. When we (and Carrie) first meet him, he is a manager and an impressive man. But now, close to the end, he has disintegrated into a drunken bum.

> When he reached Forty-Second Street, the fire signs were already blazing brightly. Crowds were hastening to dine. Through bright windows, at every corner, might be seen gay companies in luxuriant restaurants. There were coaches and crowded cable cars.

This article is adapted from the keynote address at the Conference on Times Square sponsored by the Buell Center for American Architecture, Columbia University, March 6, 1997.

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> In his weary and hungry state, he should never have come here. The contrast was too sharp. "What's the use," he thought. "It's all up with me. I'll quit this."

Then and there, he decides to kill himself; four pages later he does it and the book ends. But he is drawn to the light, even as it seems to proclaim death for him.

In the next decade, Times Square's "fire signs," like so many American industrial products in those days, just grew and grew. Around 1910 a circa-eighty-foot sign featured an electric young woman whose skirts blew back and forth and up and around her in response to an electronic program, to promote "Heatherbloom Petticoats." Heatherbloom established a Times Square tradition in which Calvin Klein, Benetton, and DKNY are still working today, capitalizing on the aura of "the capital of dangerous love." Beyond the products and activities they promoted, Times Square's signs have always proclaimed a promotional environment, a spectacular place where Americans could imagine themselves—and sometimes actually see themselves—not merely as spectators but as participants in the spectacle.

I was going to write that Times Square quickly established itself as the most striking public space in New York. But then I realized it wasn't true—or maybe only half true. As a great public space, Times Square is, and always was, tied with Central Park. But they are antithetical as human experiences, and the antitheses that they constitute help give New York its distinctive form. To experience Central Park is to submerge yourself in nature—though a nature orchestrated by human beings. To experience Times Square is to utterly detach yourself from nature and submerge yourself in an environment that's totally artificial and created by human beings. From the Park you enjoy a long view over or through the trees, where you can see the city take form beyond you. In the Square you're completely enclosed, and you can't see anything except the buildings and signs that are part of the Square itself. In the Park you enjoy a landscape that changes with the seasons, but is constant from year to year. In the Square you don't see the seasons at all (though you can feel them), but you are subject to the most dramatic and extreme turnovers in buildings and signs. The Park is configured to give the subject a temporary rest from dealing. The Square is arranged to promote the most intense and frantic modes of hyper-dealing. If you are lucky enough to know both, and to negotiate between them, you can be fully attuned to twentieth-century urban life.

One of the Square's special qualities, all through the twentieth century, has been its capacity to nourish and inspire impressive works in every genre of art. These works themselves have been "fire signs," shedding light not only on the Square and the people in it, but on each other. Think of the novels, from *Sister Carrie* to *The Great Gatsby* to Damon Runyon's short stories to John Rechy's *City of Night* to James Leo Herlihy's *Midnight Cowboy* to Paul Rogers's *Saul's Book* and Alix Shulman's *On the Stroll*. Or of the movies, from *Stage Door* to *Dance, Girl, Dance* to *Guys and Dolls* to *The Sweet Smell of Success* to *The Producers* to *A Chorus Line* to *Taxi Driver* to *Fame* to *Batman*. We could play this fire sign game with generations of paintings, of songs (even as Hurstwood collapses, Sister Carrie sings to herself, "There's a Broken Heart for every light on Broadway"), of stores, of office buildings, of restaurants, of theaters—but here you need to be prepared to cry. The Square's whole life has been a life of self-reflection and semiotic overflow. To be there, to even think about being there, is to be drenched in richness of meaning.

Some of the meaning is luminously hopeful. There's *The Jazz Singer*, Al Jolson's boy from the ghetto seeing his name in lights. Another equally classic Times Square image is Ruby Keeler in *42nd Street*, in a top hat, dancing at first on a theater's stage, but then suddenly on the roof of a moving taxi. In fact, this image is a democratic parable. Keeler is portrayed as a klutz who can't dance—unlike her rival, Bebe Daniels, who can—but who is like her audience, like us. (My mother, who saw Keeler perform many times, said she could dance up a storm, and was playing a klutz here only for drama's sake.) Yet she dances, though she can't; through the movie's magic realism, she can overcome both gravity and traffic—she can fly. Art empowers her—and ordinary people like

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us, who identify with her—to do anything.

In Alan Parker's *Fame*, fifty years later, the protagonist again dances on a moving cab, and once more it is a parable of democracy. But now the subject is collective: a whole bunch of kids who can do it, a scruffy, multinational, urban-public-school bunch of kids, and not by magic realism but by force of real talent. (These kids are from the former High School of the Performing Arts, now *aufgehoben* into La Guardia High uptown at Lincoln Center.) The most striking idea here is that now there are new people in the cast and on the street; many of these new people are colored, many are poor. But remember the 1964 song "Dancing in the Streets"? It says, "It doesn't matter what you wear, as long as you are there." Although *Fame* appeared in the 1980s, it grows out of a 1960s edition of Popular Front democracy, the kind of sensibility that rejoices in public spaces and public spectacles as media for bringing very different kinds of people together. The message is, the Square is big enough to hold them all.

But it often seems that these hopeful visions are eclipsed by bitter diatribes whose theme is Paradise Lost. So much of the talk about Times Square seems to be both driven and crippled by nostalgia. In the 1980s, some people complained that it wasn't what it had been in the 1940s, others that it wasn't what it had been in the 1970s. Indeed, Times Square has the capacity to engender a "discourse of nostalgia" that floats freely and unites people with radically different views of the Square and the world: people (like my mother) who are nostalgic for the great days of Helen Hayes and Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontaine; people (like our mayor, and like former mayor Ed Koch) who are nostalgic for the years of Winchell, Runyon, and *Guys and Dolls*; and people (like Samuel Delaney, Rem Koolhaas, photographer Langdon Clay) who are nostalgic for the pre-AIDS golden age of hustling.

If you study the history of Times Square, it's amazing to see how pervasive nostalgia is as an organizing force for visions of the place. In the 1930s, for instance, there seems to have been a consensus that the Square had hopelessly declined from what it was in the golden age of the 1910s and 1920s. You can find it in the *WPA Guide,* circa 1939:

> [During the Depression] theaters closed one after another, and contract bridge games, chess tournaments and sideshows occupied the vacant stores. Long before, however, decisive popular support had shifted from dramas and musical comedies to motion pictures. Hollywood had taken over all the best locations, relegating the legitimate theater business to the side streets . . . . On 42nd Street, once the district's showplace, famous theaters have been converted into movie "grind" houses devoted [mostly to] burlesque shows. Among cut-rate haberdasheries, cafeterias and bus stations are tokens of a not-so-distant past.

What was once a path of glory has turned into a location for "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." According to the *Guide,* "Only the lonely, those with nowhere else to go, will go there now." And this is the way people talked in an era that we see as Times Square's golden age.

Official vision, the vision shared by everyone who has ruled Albany or City Hall for the last fifty years, places the golden age in 1945, when mobs of people danced in the streets in honor of our victory in "The Good War," and dashing young sailors (pretty much all white) poured off their ships in the harbor and along the Hudson to go "On the Town."

After the golden age, it's said, the Square was overrun by commercial sex, sleaze, and violence, and it became a human sinkhole, a civic disgrace, a place where no decent person would willingly go, and where the only helpful thing would be to blow it all away. Mayors, governors, and their planners, radically opposed in so many other ways, have all agreed—or simply taken it for granted—that the Square has become a malignant tumor, and that it's got to go.

Sometimes the nostalgia and the hatred are reversed. Rem Koolhaas recently wrote a moving elegy for the golden age of hustling on the Square. He is probably mourning for the late 1970s: his piece accompanies a series of luminous photos by Langdon Clay (reproduced in *Grand Street* #57, Summer 1996) dated 1979, just before the age of AIDS. He vilifies those who killed it: "a coalition of moralists, planners, and a nostalgia-driven entertainment giant." But he doesn't understand the emotions of the people who hate that old Times Square: they

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are just as passionately intense as Koolhaas, and a lot less controlled.

One of the most passionate enemies of the old 42nd Street is Travis Bickle, the Vietnam vet and Underground Man who is the hero of Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976). Travis feels no nostalgia: he is trapped in the present moment like Kafka's mole in his impenetrable burrow. He lives in a filthy room, cramped yet almost bare, just west of the Square. Travis can't sleep, and goes through the "emotional insomnia" that John Rechy (in *City of Night,* 1963) says is the true Times Square wavelength. His entertainment is the all-night porn flicks and shooting galleries around 42nd Street. Sometimes he appears at home in these lower depths. But we see an ominous undercurrent quite early in the film. There are several shots, taken from his cab, that focus on crowds of men and women around the Square. Here the light is always lurid, the textures grungy, the sound abrasive. Some of these people could be prostitutes with their customers and pimps; others could just be ordinary people out having a good time. But they all exude sexuality, and this seems to make Travis seethe. Suddenly a candidate for president gets into his cab. When the man asks him what he thinks a president should do, Travis's rage spews out:

> Well, he should clean up this city here. It's full of filth and scum, scum and filth. It's like an open sewer. Sometimes I can hardly take it. Some days I go out and smell it, and then I get headaches that just stay and never go away. We need a president that would clean up this whole mess. Flush it out.

The candidate is startled at the violence of Travis's feelings, and so are we. It's as if Travis's hatred for "them," the men and women of the Square, has become a catalyst for every hateful desire of his own; he is projecting onto "them" all that he most fears in himself. In the last couple of minutes, after he goes on a rampage and kills several of "them," he looks relaxed and feels cleansed. Not only is *he* cleansed by his killings: the old Times Square magically disappears; the city in the last frames is entirely gentrified, pastoral, like some real estate developer's dream.

According to the official nostalgic vision, sex and violence and crime arrived in the Square only yesterday; its everyday life was pastoral till that point. In fact, if we read around in its history, we find that violence has always been close to the surface here. Any place on earth that generates crowds and promotes emotional extravagance and release is bound to be violent. Many academic people today, following the critic Mikhail Bakhtin, idealize everything connected with the word "carnivalesque"; but Bakhtin knew that carnivals were dangerous, that they were places where people got killed. Back in the 1910s, when cars were still a novelty, the Square was already a leading site for drive-by killings. Meyer Wolfsheim, the Jewish gambler in *The Great Gatsby,* gives a vivid account of one of these, "the night they shot Rosey Rosenthal," his dear friend, outside the old Metropole Hotel on Broadway and 45th. That murder really happened; what made it special was not the intimacy between murderers and police—that was a routine affair—but the fact that it got into the papers. (Andy Logan, a great city reporter, in her book *Against the Evidence,* argued plausibly that Charles Becker, the police captain executed for this crime, was a crook but not a killer, and, as his widow inscribed on his tombstone, was "Murdered by Governor Whitman.") Soon after *The Great Gatsby* appeared, Arnold Rothstein—consummate gambler, loan shark, sportsman, Broadway producer, and *bon vivant,* and real-life *Gatsby* character—would meet the same fate, victim of his greatest hit.

Complaints about Times Square often blend fear of violence with revulsion for the lowest classes. In fact, the Square has always been loaded with some of the poorest people in the city. Here is Hurstwood again, cold and hungry, looking longingly inside a Broadway restaurant:

> "Eat" he mumbled. "That's right, eat. Nobody else wants any."
>
> People turned to look after him, so uncouth was his shambling figure. Several officers followed him with their eyes to see that he did not beg of anybody.

Sounds up-to-date, doesn't it? Hurstwood seems about to commit what our mayor would call a "quality-of-life crime." The Square's re-

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spectable people have always harangued the cops to get rid of these shadows so close to the bright lights.

As for sex, let's remember that Heatherbloom woman. Ninety years ago, people were talking about that strip of Broadway as "the capital of dangerous love." Since Rechy's *City of Night* and Herlihy's *Midnight Cowboy* (1965; adapted for film in 1969), we have had an image of the world of Times Square gay hustling. But the vibrancy and desperation of the Square's homosexuality were not so different from the texture of its heterosexuality. So many of the classic and glamorous Broadway films are really about the fate of girls who come to Broadway hoping their bodies will put their names in lights. What do you think "Naughty, bawdy, gaudy, sporty 42nd Street" means? It's a delightful movie; but part of its charm is the way it uses magic realism, as in *The Jazz Singer*, to turn tragedy into comedy. What do you think happened to all those generations of girls who were rejected at those auditions, or who never made it off the chorus lines, or (as in *42nd Street*) who got the part but broke a leg? Sexuality is the only card they hold, but it depreciates fast; before they know it, they are dumped by boyfriends and producers in favor of younger, fresher meat. No sex is shown in films like *Stage Door*, and Katherine Hepburn is presented there as being above such things, so it's easy to miss—I missed it when I was a kid—but you can hear it in the wisecracks these girls make about each other (and sometimes about themselves), and you can see it in the way they wait for the phone to ring.

Apart from all the generations of sexual activity around the Square, sexual fantasy has always been the primary fuel for its "fire signs." One spring day in the middle eighties, I met a CUNY graduate student and his partner on the west side of the Square, holding hands as they looked raptly up and to the east. They pointed out a Calvin Klein male underwear ad that portrayed a headless body, dressed only in blindingly white Klein boxer shorts against a black background, with red intimations of sunrise (or traces of sunset?) at the edge. It was pitched at a weird angle so that, as you looked up, the model seemed to be falling in your face. The foreshortened, vertiginous perspective was borrowed from Mantegna's "Dead Christ," the color scheme and religious aura from a dozen other Renaissance masterworks. You could tell this art director not only had been to grad school, but had read Leo Steinberg's *The Sexuality of Christ.*

A traffic-stopper from the early 1990s was an enormous curved Benetton poster on 49th Street and Seventh Avenue, touting the company's new *Colors* magazine. It featured the usual multiracial Benetton assortment of teenagers, only here they were totally, frontally nude. Or not quite nude: as they faced the camera—some looking flustered, others brazen—they were all holding small placards over their genitals: they said *truth, lies, attitude, power*, and—for the youngest looking kid, hair tousled, looking like a gamine—*first date*. What's going on here? As in many interesting ads, ambiguity is central to the allure. What can have got these kids out of their clothes and put them on an embarrassing display? My first fantasy was: drug raid on a disco, strip search in the lockup. Whatever you think, spectators have to create a story to make the ad make sense, and as we do, we notice (or else we don't notice) that we are working for the Company. Then, too, many of us will feel aroused, and then feel guilty, at the sight of these naked kids—who could be our kids, who look as innocent and as vulnerable as any of our kids—and here, too, it's as if the Company is winking at us, implicitly promising not to tell, reassuring us we're all in this together. Ever since the Heatherbloom lady, rich soft-core semiotic desserts like these have been a Times Square special.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, in what seems like a perverse zeal against sex, belongs squarely in the tradition of the sleazier producers in these movies, trumpeting wholesome "family values" while they pinch actresses' cheeks. What business does our Mayor think MTV is in, or HBO, or some of those lush hotel chains he's been courting? Doesn't he see what business he's in now? Whether he does or not, we need to see it, because, as long as we love New York, we're all in it with him.

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How do we account for the obsessive, futile attempt, as old as Times Square itself, to create a Times Square without sex or sleaze? Some of it is rooted in a puritanical complex that intertwines fear of sex with fear of the city itself. This complex goes back a long way: we can find it at the very end of the Bible, in the Book of Revelation, in the portrayal of the Great Whore Babylon. When God destroys her, the book says, all urban activities—trade, commerce, crafts, music—come to an abrupt end.

But an important part of the story is more modern and secular, and rooted in contemporary political economy. The high concept is called FIRE: finance, insurance, and real estate. As the deindustrialization of America began—in New York, the garment industry was the first to go—smart money came to believe that the only salvation of America's cities lay in FIRE. From this perspective, the optimal business districts were uniform blocks of large office towers, like Wall Street and Rockefeller Center. Neighborhoods like Times Square, scruffy and raggedy, full of small parcels and mixed uses, were irrational and inefficient. Remember in *Guys and Dolls,* when the gambler Sky Masterson complains to Sarah Brown, a.k.a. Sister Salvation, "You have wished yourself a Scarsdale Galahad, a breakfast-eating Brooks Brothers type." Sarah's wish was that of our leaders, Democratic and Republican, liberal and conservative, sophisticated and provincial, for the past fifty years. That "Scarsdale Galahad" would bring to the Square the saving, purifying FIRE.

In 1978 Mayor Koch, announcing that 42nd Street was disgraceful and hopeless, entertained plans for what he called "an urban theme park" on 42nd Street, just west of the Square, with the New Amsterdam Theater as a primary focus. Koch asked for models, but then disparaged the ones he got: "New York isn't orange juice," he said, "it's seltzer." In this unrehearsed epigram, Koch affirmed our own very special vulgar ethnic moxie against the nutritious but sanitized "American" monoculture that feared and dreaded New York, and that, during our 1975-1976 fiscal crisis, led to the notorious headline: "Ford to City: Drop Dead." "Seltzer" was the Koch whom even political adversary Ruth Messinger admires (along with Messinger supporters like me), and whose prejudices and vanities and fears she shares.

Alas, Koch didn't have the courage of his metaphors. He let loose a plan that, had it been fulfilled, would have drowned the whole Square in orange juice. He accepted the real estate industry's premise that the only way to get action was to build enormous skyscrapers on the corners of 42nd and Seventh Avenue. He and Governor Mario Cuomo both embraced it, and put it under control of the state Urban Development Corporation. The UDC brought in the Cooper-Ekstut planning firm to lay down design guidelines, which said that all new buildings must fit into the context of the Times Square environment as it was. As principal developer, Koch chose his biggest contributor, George Klein. As its main architect, Klein's company, Park Tower Realty, picked Philip Johnson, a man who has created some beautiful and imaginative buildings, but whose past as a Nazi sympathizer should have been a danger sign. Johnson packaged himself in contradictory ways, at once a nihilist who was above any guidelines and a whore who would build whatever his client told him to. The outcome, unveiled in early 1983, was a set of three giant slabs, *à la* upper Sixth Avenue, only decorated with Mansard roofs like the roof of the *Times* Building. This design combined the most arid and arrogant modernism with the most blatant and slavish postmodern pseudo-history. Johnson said he wanted to turn Times Square into an extension of Rockefeller Center, and that New Yorkers should be glad. Instead, a great many got violently mad.

At this point, in 1983-1984, the *Times* began to divide in fascinating ways. Abe Rosenthal supported the project with his usual crude and bullying editorials—"Get Out of the Way on Times Square," "Porn Again or Born Again"—but Paul Goldberger denounced it on the arts pages. Ada Louise Huxtable (who by then had left the *Times* but remained forever linked with it in public imagination) combined brilliant analysis with a Hepburnesque acerbic hauteur. All sorts of new people got into the case. Carter Wiseman in *New York* and Michael Sorkin in the *Village Voice* tore the project to pieces. (The

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high point of Sorkin's career came when Johnson refused to appear at a Forum on Times Square if he was in the room.)

The Municipal Art Society, under Kent Barwick, made Times Square a top priority, and demonstrated a genius for publicity. It arranged to abruptly turn off all the bright lights, so people could see how much they meant. It started an international design competition for the Square, and exhibited drawings and models far better than Johnson's. It recruited old vaudevilleans to sing old songs of the Broadway that seemed on the ropes. It made a cassette using sophisticated computer simulations to show how the towers would blot out the sky, arguing that New York was being betrayed by its leaders' faith in FIRE.

Between 1986 and 1988 the City Planning Commission and the state UDC pressed Park Tower to renegotiate the office towers' design, to incorporate bright lights and big signs and show some respect for the context of the Square. This was an improvement, but the towers' size remained overpowering, and the developers escaped their original obligation to transform the 42nd Street subway station. However, the stock market crash of 1987 collapsed the market for commercial real estate. Koch and Cuomo had praised Klein and Park Tower as brilliant salesmen; but even with vast subsidies and tax breaks, they themselves were the only ones willing to buy. Ironically, disaster kept further disaster from happening, and the tower sites are still idle today.

The next step came in 1992, when the city and state negotiated an "Interim Plan" with the developers. In place of gigantism, they would promote small-scale street-level revitalization along 42nd Street. Now, in place of FIRE, a new key word had gained power: *entertainment.* Could it be that after a decade of controversy, our leaders had actually learned something about New York? They certainly seemed to have learned something about 42nd Street and Times Square: they saw that the point of the Street and the Square was extravagant entertainment. They agreed to try to promote more. They appointed an architect, Robert Stern (from Columbia University), and a designer, Tibor Kalman (from the Benetton Company), who had an intuitive feeling for the Square. That was the good news; the bad news was that it was only "interim," and that if the real estate market ever picks up, Park Tower/Prudential will still have the right to build those dark Satanic mills. Even with new people running the city and the state, no politician has the brains and guts to say the original deal was a disaster and walk away from it.

Finally, in February 1994, after *hondeling* between Stern and Disney CEO Michael Eisner, the ball game abruptly changed. Disney announced its intention to lease the New Amsterdam and use it as a base for extensive New York operations. The city courted Disney enthusiastically. (Some people, noticing how the city turned over Central Park to the Company for its premiere of *Pocohontas* in 1995, and turned over almost the whole of midtown for a Disney Parade in 1997, would say the proper word is "abjectly." Next year the Brooklyn Bridge?) So far, apart from the renovated and recently reopened New Amsterdam Theater, Disney has not spent much money. But it has definitely invested its superclean, superrich and super-American image. And if it ever builds the hotels and clubs it intermittently talks about, it seems to have made a commitment to a terrific architectural firm. Arquitectonica of Miami (whose buildings framed *Miami Vice),* which can give the Street the moxie it deserves. Disney's presence had an immediate impact in leveraging other huge conglomerates onto the Street: now HBO, MTV, AMC, Marriott, Tussaud, Condé Nast, Reuters, are all eager to be there, and to build on an enormous scale.

So should we worry? Today's blatantly commercial model of urban renewal has the capacity to waste more land than the modes of the past. The scale, incandescence, and symbolic power of Times Square make everything here more urgent and intense. Long-standing rage against Disney is part of the deal. This is based partly on an accurate view of Walt Disney's racist and xenophobic right-wing career, but also on prejudices of our own: prejudices of many intellectuals against mass culture, prejudices of seltzer against orange juice, of ethnic easterners against middle America, of New York against

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the world. I'm not exactly saying these prejudices are wrong; I'll fight for most of them, but they could stand some critical scrutiny.

For instance, it has become a truism of the 1990s to blame the Disney Corporation for Mayor Giuliani's ongoing vendetta against the sex business. (To be precise, it's against the *small* sex business; the mayor is cozy with *big* sex businesses with big bottom lines.) But is it true? Disney may be behind it all, but I'm still waiting to see some hard evidence. It may be, though, that the truth is on a less multinational scale. We need to look to our own house, to New York's own volatile political culture, so receptive to mobilizations of bias and outbursts of bad faith. We should remember the outer-borough Catholics who make up a large part of Giuliani's support. Note, too, that on matters of morality and culture, many black and Latin churches are as repressive and hypocritical as anybody. In American politics since 1980, fundamentalists of all faiths have learned how to work together, and know that they are closer in spirit to fundamentalists in other religions than they are to humanists within their own. Another current in American life has been a desire to protect our children from harm that is really out there: demagogues have exploited this fear for generations, and often, as in the satanic ritual/child abuse scares of the 1980s, whipped large numbers of people into hysterical frenzy. This would be an ongoing struggle, even if the Disney Corp. had never come into being. Civil libertarians need to deal with real fears, and to show people that the castration of culture won't help their children grow up.

If Disney has played a role in this, it has probably been indirect: not Disney making threats, but other people censoring themselves out of fear that Disney and all its capital might disappear. On 42nd Street, as elsewhere, the most effective censorship is self-censorship. I'm not saying we don't have a Disney problem; but the problem may be not so much what Disney does to people as what the very mention of its name pushes people and institutions—like the 42nd Street Business Improvement District—to do to themselves. Remember the late 1960s graffito, SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL POLICE—BEAT YOURSELF UP? It may be that, in the late-twentieth-century USA, Disney, along with our other media conglomerates, functions as a sort of cultural superego. But if it does, then the only effective way for intellectuals to fight it is to strengthen our cultural ego, to learn to sing jazz and generate light, to make sure that our dear city won't beat itself up.

What can we hope for in Times Square tomorrow? The cover of the *New Yorker* for June 12, 1995, offers a lovely vision by B. Bliet. Bliet portrays a tourist, apparently tired but earnest, confronting a great array of signs in Spanish, Russian, Japanese, Arabic, Portuguese, Hungarian, Hebrew, Chinese, Greek, French, Korean, Persian, Urdu, Vietnamese, and other tongues I've missed. This vision can help us imagine a public space oriented toward the future, and democratic and inclusive enough to contain the whole world. □

P.S. I've just read, in the *Times* of August 1, about a deal in the works to bring Reuters to Times Square. It wants to build an 800,000-square-foot office tower on Seventh Avenue and 42nd Street. Now, Reuters is one of the more interesting world media giants, and its presence on the Square could be a good thing, but not if the city grants it the staggering tax breaks it seems to want to give—as if to say, in the midst of a property boom, "Now, take our prime real estate—please!" (Would they call it Henny Youngman Plaza?) And not if it is built in the way the landowner, Prudential Insurance, wants to build it: reviving Philip Johnson's despised design, the great glass slab, scourge of sky and street. People who care about the Square had better raise the roof, before this deal gets done. (See what I get for making an argument that our governments have learned something?)

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Michael Tomasky

THE LEFT AND CRIME

I have observed, in the course of my reporting on New York City politics in recent years, the odd phenomenon of liberal Democrats muttering in vague opposition to the fantastic decreases in the city's crime rate. This is not done openly; certainly no one has set up shop in City Hall Park and hoisted placards reading, "More Homicides!" or "No Auto Theft, No Peace!" Rather it has been a *sub rosa* and understood sentiment, coursing unspoken through the blood of political conversation. It has not been unusual to hear a progressive activist, say, rebuke the local press for making too much of the crime reduction, or fall back on the obviously true (but certainly no more incisive for being so) cliché that crime reduction is no panacea for the city's multifarious ills. Besides, the numbers were achieved by the despised Rudolph Giuliani, the current Republican mayor, and therefore must be either not real or puffed up or, most likely, won at far too high a cost to civil liberties. There is a little bit of something at least to the last two of these arguments—a year or so ago, the local papers came close to producing proof of reduction inflation, if you will, in the thirty-fourth precinct in the upper Manhattan neighborhood of Washington Heights, and certainly the number of brutality complaints has risen dramatically.

On one level, this is just politics; no one in one party wants to give credit to a fellow from the other party for anything. But shovel below the topsoil and you see a problem, I think, that is a little more complex. For thirty years, crime rates have exploded in almost every city in America. And, for thirty years, urban liberals and progressives, who ran most of these cities, have not done much about it. This is not to say the explosion is the fault of urban liberalism; bureaucratized and aloof police departments must accept a much more direct responsibility. Neither is it to say that the conditions that encourage crime (poverty, in a word) might not have been alleviated somewhat by more of the social spending progressives have argued for. But the notion of crime as a response purely to social deprivation—a notion shared by most liberals and leftists—and the concomitant notion of the street criminal as the symbolic cynosure of civil libertarian concerns has not been terribly helpful. Helpful, that is, to the people—poor, law-abiding, usually black and Hispanic—who live under daily threat of life and limb.

Before we go any further, some numbers and their likely explanations. In June, the Federal Bureau of Investigation released its 1996 crime statistics. Overall violent crime—homicide, robbery, aggravated assault, and rape—fell 7 percent. Homicide dropped by 11 percent. Since 1993, total crime has fallen in seventeen of the country's twenty-five largest cities: by 36 percent in New York, by 25 percent in Los Angeles, by 20 percent in Boston and San Francisco, by 14 percent in Denver. In Hartford, Connecticut, crime fell by 20 percent in just one year, from 1995 to 1996, and has hit a ten-year low. California has achieved its lowest crime rate since 1968. These are all remarkable accomplishments, and New York City, always America's most feared metropolis, leads the way in such cocksure fashion that it can now call itself the safest large city in the United States. The homicide rate has fallen so dramatically that, if numbers for the first half of this year

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hold, the city will finish 1997 with fewer than 700 murders, down from more than 2,200 in 1990.

It's difficult to deny that this sort of thing makes life better for everyone. And for whom especially? In the South Bronx, the neighborhood of *Fort Apache* fame, homicides have gone from sixty-eight in 1993 to a remarkable eighteen in 1996. In Brooklyn's seventy-fifth precinct, covering the neighborhood of East New York and in recent years the city's most crime-ridden precinct, homicides in 1996 numbered thirty-eight, a reduction by two-thirds over the same time period. You don't need me to tell you who does, and doesn't, live in those neighborhoods. One hesitates to ape a Giuliani line, but he is within his rights to say that many black and Hispanic people, innocent and perhaps not so, are alive today who would not be if things hadn't changed.

Why and how they changed is the topic of ferocious debate, and here again, Giuliani's decriers have a smidgen of a point. There are a few commonly offered explanations that have nothing to do with policing. The crack epidemic seems to have run a natural course, having abated since its peak in the mid- to late-1980s. Second, more criminals are in jail—a lot more. With the prison construction boom and the passage in Congress and state houses of stricter sentencing laws, the total number of people incarcerated in the United States more than doubled from 1984 to 1994, when the figure topped nine hundred thousand (this is not necessarily a development we want to applaud, of course, but it is a factor). Third, unemployment among teenagers, like unemployment generally, has decreased, by 25 percent since 1991. Finally, and most persuasively, we have simple demography—there are fewer teenagers and young adults around than there were ten years ago, and fewer teenagers and young adults means less crime (it has also produced—I swear I heard this on the radio the other day—a severe babysitter shortage).

All these have surely played a role, but it seems awfully hard to deny the different policing strategies, instituted in several cities but nowhere more completely than in New York, their due. The now-famous "broken windows" theory, first put forth in 1982 by the criminologists George Kelling and James Q. Wilson, and lately applied to the streets by the likes of former New York Police Commissioner William Bratton, had its beginnings in Kelling's Newark Foot Patrol Experiment of the mid-1970s. Back then, cities had moved police off foot patrols and into cruisers; but the state of New Jersey offered Newark some extra funding for a pilot foot-patrol program. Kelling strolled along with them, and found that over time citizens and officers established a "disorder threshold" with which neighborhoods were, he says, comfortable:

> They did not merely prohibit specific acts, such as soliciting for prostitution, but often defined the conditions and manner under which activities could be carried out: for example, panhandling was permissible, but not from people standing still or waiting at a bus stop; sitting on the stoops of stores was accepted, but not lying down; drinking alcohol in public could be done only if the bottle was in a brown paper bag, and only off main thoroughfares.

Thus were Kelling and Wilson led to their conclusion: that controlling the small problems, creating order, would perforce help control the larger ones. The "broken windows" appellation derives from the analogous observation that if you place two cars side by side on a city street, one with a broken window and one pristine, the former will be stripped in a matter of hours (or minutes), while the latter may never be touched.

We know what this meant on the streets: if you arrest people for committing small crimes, which police departments had spent years ignoring, you spare the citizenry commission of larger ones. Crime decreased dramatically in New York's subways, for example, when transit cops cracked down on farebeating, because when they ran their checks on farebeaters, they often found that the miscreants had warrants for more serious offenses. In places—parks, for example—where annoyances like public urination and camping have been tolerated, stop tolerating, and watch as the space becomes usable again.

The new crime-fighting strategies arrived

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hand-in-hand with a debureaucratization of police departments. A string of corruption scandals across the country in the 1960s led police departments everywhere to withdraw police from the streets, on the theory that if officers didn't come into daily contact with the bad element, they would face less temptation to accept bribes. The 911 system, put into widespread use in the 1970s, produced a mindset by which police often did little more than respond to calls. Some—conservatives, mainly—argue that Warren Court decisions on criminals' rights rendered police unable to act in many cases; whether or not that's true, we can say at any rate that departments began to draft policies that led to avoidance of contact with the public, to minimize the risks of scandal and/or litigation. Finally, departmental bureaucracies, like all bureaucracies, just naturally reinvent themselves every so often to provide a new rationale for their existence; in the 1970s and 1980s, this meant a trend toward specialization—drug units, sex-crime units, all manner of elite units, and none of them under the control of the precinct commander. It was, in other words, a system of near-perfect nonaccountability, as Bratton told the *Hartford Courant* in April:

> Before, if you're the precinct commander, you would get your head handed to you every week in community meetings about the drug dealing in your precinct. You have to pass that information up to the drug unit. So, you send it up your chain of command to the division commander, to your borough commander, to your chief of patrol, to your chief of the department, who then sends it down to the chief of organized crime, who then sends it down to his borough commander, down to his division commander, down to his squad commander. And the squad commander sends back up and down [the message]: "We'll be there in three months. We'll be there for a week, and then we're going to leave." And that is how the NYPD worked.

Community policing changed this. In New York, Bratton designed the COMSTAT system: weekly (or more) meetings of everyone from the commissioner, and often the mayor, on down to precinct commanders, who were held to account for the crime in their areas. More than a few precinct commanders have testified about the grillings they received from police brass at these conclaves. You don't need to be Eliot Ness to understand that transfer from a system designed to hide accountability to one designed to accentuate it made things work better.

So demography and all the rest have something to do with the lower numbers—there are cities, such as Los Angeles, where Bratton-type methods have not been put into place with much success, and crime has still gone down—but to argue that the new strategies have not been an important factor in many cities seems to defy simple common sense. And their success calls into question a central tenet of liberal-left belief about crime. Obviously, on its most fundamental level, street crime is a response to poverty and lack of options; it stands to reason that if everyone had a job and made at least, say, $20,000 or $30,000 a year, not many people would have much of a motive to steal anything from anyone, and a world so organized is still a world very much worth fighting for.

But the evidence suggests that at least some crime, as Kelling hypothesized and Bratton demonstrated, is a response to disorder. When there seem to be no rules, in a park or on a street corner, people will naturally keep probing, just to see where the line in the sand actually is (I'd argue that we all behave this way; even those of us whose most heinous crime would be littering know we're more likely to search out a trash can where the sidewalk is pristine, less likely where it's already strewn). When a command has to be passed up five rungs and back down six and results in a one-week sweep three months down the road, that line exists at a point so remote as to be laughable (although people who live in neighborhoods where they had to think hard about going out after dark probably weren't laughing). Order, then—not as in law and order, but as in basic civic order—has some value after all.

And it has value, I would submit, from a left perspective. If ideology's great pendulum is to swing back toward the left, the first step is to prise it away from the right. People like Kelling and Bratton are obviously not leftists, but it is a terrible mistake to dismiss them as conservatives. Indeed, on the criminological continuum,

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Kelling and Bratton, and others who argue for crime-prevention strategies, are probably somewhere in the middle. Conservatives want harsh penalties. This dialogue has come to be known as the "front-end/back-end" debate. A moderate brand of liberalism argues for front-end solutions like community policing and drug rehabilitation and youth services and, more dodgily in my view—because the bad guys will always have access to any guns they want through the black market—stricter gun control. The right, by contrast, wants more prisons, tougher sentencing laws, more applications of the death penalty, "three strikes" laws, and the like. These measures all fit the "tough on crime" mold, but they are all nondeterrents for the simple reason that about one in twenty people who commit serious crimes actually ends up doing time, and a third of those are for nonviolent offenses (drug possession, drunk driving). California's three-strikes law has locked up 2,750 felons, fully 85 percent of whom are non-violent offenders, notoriously including one man whose third strike consisted of stealing a slice of pepperoni pizza. If the prevention of "quality-of-life" offenses gets results, and it appears to be doing that, then as crime abates, it seems to me there will inevitably be less clamoring for, and pandering to, maladies like the death penalty and three-strikes laws, and it may indeed begin to swing public opinion toward seeing the efficacy of things like more money for drug treatment. That, at least, is a start.

Of the various rights the Constitution conveys to us, one of them is not the right to walk down the street in safety. No case history has established such a right, and even the phrase "domestic tranquility," which appears in the preamble to the Constitution, has no real legal meaning. Rights, rather, are in the main individual protections against the state, and as such are negative, that is, they are designed to prevent government intrusion into personal affairs. There exist, of course, certain affirmative rights such as voting, and affirmative pieces of public policy such as Social Security and collective bargaining that have come to be accepted as rights, as indeed they should. But whether we like it or not, the Constitution falls short of making the case for positive rights—the insistence, for example, on a right to shelter or health care, on a governmental obligation to the poor, or, in the present case, a duty to make the streets safe—and the courts have followed this instruction with diligence.

Instead, public safety is a mere community interest. It is, nevertheless, a compelling and obvious one. Jefferson, writing the Crimes Bill of 1779, went so far as to say:

> Whereas, it frequently happens that wicked and dissolute men, resigning themselves to the dominion of inordinate passions, commit violations on the lives, liberties and property of others, and the secure enjoyment of these having *principally* induced men to enter into society, government would be defective in its *principal* purpose, were it not to restrain such criminal acts, by inflicting due punishments on those who perpetrate them. [Emphasis added.]

The italicized words make the point clear enough, as do the standard definitions of liberty we've come to accept. Still, Jefferson refers above to the commission of acts against the life and property of others. What about the property of all of us?

The founders didn't have much of an answer for this, in any way that would have direct application to today's world. But it's on common property—parks, city streets and sidewalks, public housing projects—where the battle against crime is largely being fought in the era of quality-of-life policing. There is, in other words, at least as strong a community interest in the protection of these spaces as in the protection of private spaces—stronger, I should think, since "the public" is not an interest group with a powerful lobby and since so much private property these days is protected by private security forces and the like (if you live on Lake Shore Drive, your "interest" in community safety is pretty well safeguarded; but too bad for you if you live in the Robert Taylor Houses).

Here again is an area where the left has slipped into misjudgment in recent years. I refer to what we might call the standard civil libertarian line on crime and the use of public space; the civil libertarian position and the left position are not necessarily the same thing, of

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course, but in general terms, left thinking on these issues has been shaped by civil-libertarian imperatives. And although it's obviously true that the civil rights and liberties of the accused must be defended with all seriousness, it's also reasonable to argue that a view of the situation that takes only individual rights into account, or gives them unwarranted precedence, is a view that's likely to be harmful to the community interest in some cases (to say nothing of the odd paradox inhering in the fact that it's usually the left that argues the case for community and a larger social responsibility, with respect, say, to corporate avarice, or the view expressed by some CEOs that corporations' only responsibility is to their shareholders).

A couple of brief examples. Cities all over the country in recent years have passed public nuisance laws to regulate behavior in their streets and parks. In most instances, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) or its local branch has taken these ordinances to court. In some cases, they've been right to do so—sometimes these statutes are drawn so broadly as to give police wide latitude to hassle whomever they cast a dour eye upon.

But what happens when the people most directly affected welcome the laws? In February, the California State Supreme Court upheld a San Jose ordinance that prohibited suspected gang members from standing together on street corners and engaging in other forms of lawful activity. The civil liberties union sued, but the ordinance was supported by dozens of depositions from residents of the San Jose neighborhood of Rocksprings—people who complained that gang activity had made them hostages on their own block. In a similar case, more than five thousand residents of public housing in Chicago signed petitions supporting metal detectors at entrances, visitor sign-in requirements, and police sweeps—admittedly, warrantless—after barrages of gunfire in order to determine where shots might have originated.

Certainly, difficult civil liberties issues arise in these situations, and they can't be lightly dismissed. In the Chicago case, the local branch of the ACLU brought its suit in behalf of a resident whose apartment was subjected to a warrantless weapons search. But the question must be asked: Why is there a right to sleep in a public space or panhandle or congregate on a street corner in a way that obviously facilitates drug-selling, but no right to walk down one's block unmolested? When New York City removed dozens of homeless people from the Lower East Side's Tompkins Square Park—and this was done not by Giuliani, but by David Dinkins, and only after city officials had made strenuous outreach efforts toward the homeless people encamped there—the local civil liberties branch and some segments of the local left tried to cast the dispute as being between the homeless population and the yuppies who had recently gentrified the neighborhood. It may well be the case that the police acted in behalf of the yuppies, who have political clout. But it's also true that there are thousands of poor and working-class people on the Lower East Side—Eastern European senior citizens, Puerto Rican families—who, quite unlike the neighborhood's yuppies, can't go out to the Hamptons or up to the Berkshires for their dose of the greensward. They need that park.

Underlying many of these problems, of course, is race. Cops are obviously far more likely to look askance at black male teenagers than anyone else, far more likely to rough up blacks and Latinos than whites. Virtually every black man in America save maybe Michael Jordan probably knows what it's like to get the hairy eye, or worse, from a cop. Police brutality complaints—which shot up under Bratton's tenure in New York, but have lately begun to decline—are almost all lodged by blacks and Latinos.

And yet, for every black teenager who gets brusque treatment from a white cop, aren't there hundreds or thousands of black people who, on balance, need that cop to be there? Discussing the differentials between sentencing for powder cocaine crimes and crack-related crimes in his new book, *Race, Crime, and the Law*, Randall Kennedy argues that although it's certainly true that "prohibitionists of various sorts have excited racial sentiments" in justifying things like the heavier crack sentences, it's also the case that "authorities have neglected vices that have menaced black communities, thereby depriving them of equal *protection* of the law" (his emphasis). So it was,

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he points out, that when Congress passed the crack sentencing guidelines, half the black members of Congress voted for them, and not one black member charged that the law smacked of racism at the time.

The two arguments, then, meet: some crime, and maybe a lot of crime, stems from disorder; and the maintenance of order in public spaces requires that individual liberties be weighed against community interest. To recognize these points is in no way to give in to the right, whose "solutions" remain anathema. Neither is it to give up on the fight for a world in which fewer people have an incentive to commit crimes in the first place. Seven hundred murders in New York is still seven hundred murders, after all; that's still perhaps five hundred more than the number of homicides society just can't do anything about (committed by people who know each other—and even here, in the cases of spouses and lovers, more could be done—and irredeemably bad eggs). In fact it could be that to recognize the ideas of civic order and community interest is to begin that fight. I suspect that many people whose lives are most directly affected by crime would think so. □

RESPONSES

Elliott Currie

Michael Tomasky has some good points, but he takes them much too far. The good points are that communities deserve a high level of public safety, that police are probably more capable of helping to provide it than some people (left, right, or center) have assumed, and that therefore the left should support police crime-prevention strategies that deliver the goods. I agree with all of that, though I'd also add that it's hardly a new sentiment for the left, and that indeed most left criminologists that I know—including me—have agreed for years. The left-bashing tone Tomasky adopts, therefore, is both distracting and off the mark. There are people on the left who fit the straw figure Tomasky erects, but most don't, and there are fewer of them all the time.

However, that's a minor problem. The more important one is that Tomasky slides from the sound point about the potential of good policing into a set of claims for the so-called "quality of life" model of policing that doesn't stand up to scrutiny. This is important, because what we—not just the left, but everyone—ought to be supporting isn't the police strategy that's the fashion of the moment, but the police strategies we have reason to believe really make a difference. Tomasky is surely right that something the police in New York are doing has helped to drive down the crime rate, but he stretches the point in two crucial ways.

First, he attributes more of the recent decline in crime—in New York and nationwide—to police work in general than the evidence really supports. He alludes to the key problem himself, but then mostly evades it: it's difficult to give most of the credit to new community policing strategies when crime has fallen from its recent peaks in *most* major cities, including many that have invested little, in practice, in intensive community policing strategies of any kind. This isn't only Los Angeles, either: it's a lot of cities. Tomasky suggests that giving considerable credit to community policing for the decline in crime is "simple common sense." But simple common sense would also suggest that a *national* phenomenon that looks very similar in cities with and without serious community policing is likely to be *mostly* due to something else. (It's worthy of note that James Q. Wilson, the conservative co-author of the "broken windows" model, has issued the same caveat.)

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That said, I'd agree that in *some* cities with unusually large drops in violent crime—New York and Houston among them—the evidence is strong that innovative policing has made a real difference and is a significant *part* of the explanation. But Tomasky, like many other commentators, leaps too quickly to the assumption that it is the "quality of life" approach specifically that is making the difference. But that's only part of what's been going on in New York, and arguably not the most important part. Much is made of the influence of the "broken windows" argument on the New York approach, but in fact the Bratton model fits a longer-standing tradition of "problem-oriented policing"—targeting specific crime problems in a city, going after them aggressively, and monitoring the results. And while we have, to my knowledge, very little hard evidence that rousting squeegee men has much impact on serious violent crime, the evidence for some other strategies—like getting guns off the street and defusing violence around open-air drug markets—is substantial and growing.

The fact that homicide in particular has declined rapidly in New York is strong, if indirect, evidence for this point. A fall in homicide points to something happening to the key problems that drove the city's homicide rate up in the first place, notably the explosion of street drug dealing and the accompanying flood of firearms. I'm open to evidence that the more amorphous "broken windows" approach cuts homicide sharply (indeed, cuts it faster than it does lesser crime)—but I haven't seen any. Meanwhile, we *do* have evidence—from Lawrence Sherman's research in Kansas City, for example—that carefully targeted efforts to get guns off the streets can indeed reduce gun-related violence.

The distinction is important, because as Tomasky is right to point out, lives are at stake here—and so are precious civil liberties. I don't want to see limited police resources diverted to popular but weakly evaluated panaceas when they could be used to save lives in ways we're pretty sure really work. And I don't want to see morally troubling police tactics defended on the basis of flimsy evidence of their effectiveness in fighting crime. The kind of public-order policing Tomasky celebrates easily slides over into the aggressive and discriminatory police work that rightly disturbs civil libertarians. Getting tough on homeless people or teenagers in baggy pants is often justified—and Tomasky comes perilously close to this—on the ground that there's a necessary trade-off between civil liberties and public safety: that if we want our neighborhoods to be free of violence, we have to allow cops to do things that might otherwise make us squeamish. But in order to show that this trade-off exists, we'd need to show both that aggressive "public order" policing actually cuts serious violent crime significantly *and* that it does so better than *other* things the police might do that have less troubling implications for civil liberties. Someone may have that evidence. I haven't seen it.

Beyond these problems are a couple of others—less consequential, but troubling nonetheless. I hate to sound like a curmudgeon, but I've been both a criminologist and a progressive for a long time. I can't tell you how often in that time I've heard some version of Tomasky's argument that the left is all wrong on crime because . . . something. Not too many years ago some leftists were flaying other leftists because they didn't sufficiently appreciate neighborhood watch programs—the panacea of the early eighties, now encased in deafening silence. Now Tomasky recycles the same old non sequiturs. Why in the world, for example, does the success of community policing, where it has indeed been successful, "call into question a central tenet of liberal-left belief about crime"—namely, that it's often a "response to poverty and lack of options"? Most liberal or left criminologists I know—and I know a lot of them—would surely see this as a false dichotomy. Most, if asked, would say that we need a multipronged approach if we really want enduring public safety in American communities: we need early intervention programs, family supports, an intelligent employment policy, good drug treatment, better wages, and good child care—*and* we need effective, community-oriented policing. And more.

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Where's the beef? Pitting "disorder" and "poverty" *against* each other as competing, rather than complementary, explanations of crime only muddies the issue.

Tomasky also tells us that—unlike Bratton and Giuliani—urban liberals and progressives haven't *done* much about crime. Excuse me? Liberals and progressives have been quietly and painstakingly doing the real work of crime prevention in urban neighborhoods across the country for years. They've built family support and child-abuse prevention and youth development programs, community anti-gun campaigns, full-service schools—and much, much more. It's true that these efforts don't get the press that "quality of life" policing does. But unlike quality of life policing, there's often real evidence that they *work*. Liberals, for that matter, *invented* community policing—and in New York, it was David Dinkins and Lee Brown, not Rudy Giuliani and William Bratton, who first got the ball rolling to put more cops in the neighborhoods.

Tomasky is right that the cities deserve the best public safety they can get. But figuring out how to accomplish that requires much tougher-minded thinking about what really works. Fortunately, plenty of progressives are already on the job.

Ester R. Fuchs

Michael Tomasky's comment on the decline in crime rates in America's cities is a simplistic attempt to blame the left for all that has gone wrong in American politics since the 1960s. Tomasky disingenuously espouses the notion that it was "urban liberals and progressives" who were responsible for the dramatic rise in the crime rates during the past thirty years.

Tomasky's polemic on crime contains internal inconsistencies, factual errors, and unsubstantiated assertions. Here are two of his most notable claims, followed by the facts:

Liberals oppose reductions in the crime rate. The intellectual dishonesty of this assertion is highlighted by Tomasky's failure to identify the liberals who purportedly object to the decline in the urban crime rate. Liberals may object to increases in police brutality, to determinant sentencing, to overcrowded prisons, to punishment without rehabilitation for nonviolent offenders, but it is simply not true that liberals oppose a decline in the crime rate. Is there any sane individual in New York City, or the rest of the country, for that matter, who objects to the decline in the crime rate?

For the past thirty years, when progressives and liberals governed America's cities, the crime rate increased. The inaccuracy of this contention is demonstrated by a little reality check on just who governed America's ten largest cities during the past thirty years and to what extent patterns in violent crime differed. Let's look at two of the most glaring examples. Is Tomasky alluding to Frank Rizzo (Mr. Law and Order and former police commissioner) of Philadelphia or Richard J. Daley of Chicago ("Shoot to kill" during the 1960s riots) when he refers to the "liberals and progressives" who ran most cities during the past thirty years? Moreover, conservative mayors, whether they were Democrats or Republicans, did no better than their liberal colleagues in controlling the increased rate of violent crime that swept every major city between the 1960s and 1990s. According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Report, violent crime increased in San Diego, the archetypal Republican conservative city, from 222.7 reported incidents (per 100,000) in 1970 to 849.2 in 1990. This 281 percent increase was constant, with no respite even during the period in which Pete Wilson was mayor. Accordingly, the picture is decidedly mixed, and there seems to be no relationship between party affiliation or ideology of the mayor and the crime rate of any particular city. During this period every major city experienced surges in crime rates, just as today every major city is experiencing declines.

Moreover, Tomasky's ideological name-calling is simplistic. Is David Dinkins—the first African-American mayor of New York City and a

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champion of the civil rights movement—a liberal or a conservative? If we accept Tomasky's notion that liberals disagreed with Wilson and Kelling's "broken windows" theory about crime, and refused to spend the necessary dollars on policing or do the hard work to reform their police departments, then Dinkins is a conservative. For it was Dinkins who hired three thousand more police officers, went to the state legislature in Albany so that a percentage of an increased income tax could be spent on policing, appointed the Mollen Commission to go after corruption in the police department, and, as Tomasky points out, removed homeless encampments from the city's parks. In fact, the crime rate in New York City began its dramatic decline during the Dinkins administration. During that same period, Dinkins also pursued policies that attacked the "root" causes of crime, typically a liberal position. He increased funding for youth programs, job training, alternatives to incarceration and drug treatment for nonviolent offenders, and outreach for the homeless. Dinkins supported the creation of a civilian-controlled review board for complaints of police misconduct and opposed the death penalty. Dinkins's "Safe Streets, Safe City" program was not ideologically inconsistent. Programs that focus on crime prevention are not incompatible with policies that promote civic order—a complexity that seems to have escaped Tomasky's analysis.

David Dinkins is not an anomaly. His policy positions are largely shared by virtually every Democratic mayor of America's largest cities—Ed Rendell of Philadelphia, Richard M. Daley of Chicago, and Dennis Archer of Detroit, to name a few.

Tomasky's real target appears to be the civil libertarians who defend individual rights above the rights of the community. But civil libertarians come from the right *and* the left, and certainly do not represent the mainstream of liberal opinion on criminal justice policy. The problem does not stem from a failure to recognize that the ideas of civic order and community interests are linked, as Tomasky suggests. The problem comes from an articulation of community interest that excludes the needs of particular groups in our society. Women in poor communities are the primary target of street criminals and support policies that produce civic order, yet no mother of a teenage boy wants to see him brutalized by the criminal justice system. Tomasky doesn't seem to realize that both James Q. Wilson and William J. Wilson are right. Society needs policies that address "broken windows" *and* disappearing jobs. We have yet to produce public policies that do both effectively.

Randall Kennedy

I agree with Michael Tomasky that public safety is an essential public good, that there is no good reason for the left to cede to the right the law-and-order issue, that poor people have a special need for effective law enforcement because they lack the resources to obtain private protective services for themselves, and that significant sectors of the left have demonstrated too much solicitude for street criminals and too little for the victims and potential victims of drug dealers, muggers, pocketbook snatchers, rapists, murderers, and other assorted dangerous hooligans.

It does no good to Tomasky's cause, however, to minimize (as he does) significant deficiencies and inequities in the administration of justice that are the focus of those whom he criticizes. As I argue in my book *Race, Crime, and the Law*, an important impediment to effective and decent law enforcement is that an appreciable number of Americans, particularly African-Americans, look upon the criminal justice system with mistrust and resentment. These feelings cause some people to decline to be witnesses, to avoid joining police departments and prosecutors' offices, to evade jury duty, or, if they do become jurors, to impose upon police and prosecutors unreasonably heavy burdens of persuasion. To some extent these feelings have been

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nurtured by scholars, politicians, and activists who, for various reasons, exaggerate the degree to which the criminal justice system is corrupt and unfair. These feelings, however, are also nurtured by conditions that are all too real and all too ugly—conditions to which Tomasky pays insufficient attention.

I will briefly mention two. First, *as a matter of law*, police are authorized to use race (typically meaning apparent African or Latino ancestry) as an indicator of an increased risk of criminality. What this means, concretely, is that in many contexts courts authorize police to view me, a black American, differently—more suspiciously—than my white neighbor even though we are behaving in precisely the same manner. Formal permission to engage in racial discrimination helps to bring about the situation under which, as Tomasky notes, "cops are obviously far more likely to look askance at black male teenagers than [at] anyone else." Tomasky, however, should not simply observe this well-known police behavior; he should also criticize it and urge his readers to demand that legislators and judges and police officials change it.

Second, the legal and political system does scandalously little to police the police. There are formal rules that prohibit officers from mistreating those they are presumably serving. In actuality, however, in many jurisdictions, including New York City, political authorities fail to impose appropriate discipline on the putative guardians of law and order. Police lawlessness helps to generate the cynicism and anger that erode the cooperation needed for efficient law enforcement in our communities. Tomasky notes the presence of police brutality, much of which he seems to attribute to racial prejudice. Yet he is disturbingly reticent in his criticism of police misconduct. "[F]or every black teenager who gets brusque treatment from a white cop," Tomasky asks rhetorically, "aren't there hundreds of thousands of black people who, on balance, need that cop to be there?" The answer

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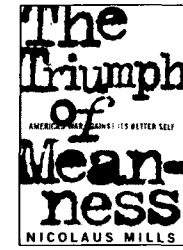

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that Tomasky implicitly offers is that hundreds of thousands of black people do need that cop to be there, even if he is brusque with a certain number of black teenagers. That is, I think, the wrong answer. For one thing, complaints about police typically involve conduct that is considerably more distressing than mere "brusqueness." Complaints arise from being spoken to in a humiliating way, or from being shoved around menacingly, or from being wrongly arrested for purposes of harassment, or from being shot under circumstances that did not require the deployment of potentially lethal force.

Furthermore, I infer from his mention of the race of the teenager and the race of the cop that Tomasky means to suggest that racial selectivity is, to some degree, animating the brusqueness (rudeness?) he mentions. If that is so, then this brusqueness is a major—not a minor— problem. That is because *all* persons—including black teenagers—need and are entitled to the protection of the police. And *all* persons should receive that protection without having to pay as a price the devaluation of their personhood on account of race, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, or any other similar characteristic.

In sum, I agree with much of what Tomasky writes but maintain that he should be more demanding of the official guardians of law and order.

Michael Tomasky Responds

Elliott Currie is a criminologist, and I'm a journalist, so I feel no shame in confessing that he knows more about criminology than I do. I'm happy to hear of my "straw men" that there are "fewer of them all the time." That said, I wonder about his assertion that the Bratton crime-fighting model is more accurately described by what he calls "problem-oriented policing" than by application of the broken windows theory. I saw George Kelling give a talk in New York City earlier this year in which he hailed Bratton (paraphrasing) as having demonstrated as police commissioner—and as transit police chief in the early 1990s, when Bratton and Kelling first worked together closely—that his theories can show results. This, on top of the many testimonials the two have offered each other, shows at least that *they* think they're theoretician and applicant of the same practice.

The most difficult point Currie raises has to do with the matter of the "necessary trade-off" between civil liberties and public safety. He's right that this is delicate stuff, and I don't think that in my piece I gave short shrift to civil libertarian concerns. It's nice to be able to say that there is or need be no such trade-off, but I suspect the circumstances of the real world are more complex and require such trade-offs every day. In a rough neighborhood on a street corner known for drug dealing and related crime, a cop sees a teenager wearing gang colors and hanging around for a lengthy period of time; he hassles him, makes him move on. The cop has violated his civil rights. But maybe, thinks the cop, based on everything he knows about his beat, that teenager was going to commit a serious crime. That strikes me as a reasonable calculation for a cop policing a high-crime area to make, and there's no way to know if he was right or wrong—crimes prevented, like rain that failed to fall, can't be measured (and please, I'm *not* saying cops should be able to issue such commands with impunity). I'm not quite sure what these "other things the police might do that have less troubling implications for civil liberties" are, and Currie doesn't spell them out.

Ester Fuchs, and to a lesser extent Currie, reprove me for calling names. Honestly. I went awfully light on the name-calling. At one point I say, apropos blame for the crime problem, that "bureaucratized and aloof police departments must accept a much more direct responsibility" than urban progressives. I don't see how I could have been much more emphatic than that. And of course I don't think that liberals "oppose reductions" in the crime rate. What I wrote was that liberals have opposed the New York's media celebration of the reduction (which I agree

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has at times been uncritical) and oppose Rudy Giuliani's getting too much credit for it. Those points are true, as Fuchs herself goes on to prove by hauling out David Dinkins as the genuine architect of New York's war on crime. Yes, Dinkins hired more cops and, with his first police commissioner, Lee Brown, initiated community policing. But add to the mix the Korean deli boycott—not a crime problem, but certainly a public order problem—and Crown Heights—police ordered not to act as two days' worth of riots resulted in a racial murder, which in turn rendered an acquittal about which Dinkins showed utterly no public remorse—and their crime record looks a tad spotty.

For one so concerned about labels, Fuchs is pretty slippery with them herself. Rizzo is fair game as a conservative who ran a big city; but Daley Sr. last governed Chicago twenty-three years ago. I can match them with John Lindsay and Marion Barry and Coleman Young and Tom Bradley and Carl Stokes and Richard Hatcher and Wilson Goode and any number of other liberal mayors. And I've never heard Dinkins lumped in with Daley Jr. and Rendell. Sure, they're "Democratic mayor[s]," but they're far closer to Giuliani than they are to Dinkins, and Fuchs knows it.

Randall Kennedy is right—I did glance over police brutality. I did so largely because of space; it's a topic that could fill an entire article, or respectable chunks of a three-hundred-page book, as it does Kennedy's. I don't really have the space here either, but as quickly as I can: It's a huge problem, and most politicians, all of whom are under pressure to jump to cops' defense, are guilty of trying to ignore it.

What I'm not sure about is how realistic "policing the police" really is. Civilian complaint review boards with real independence and power will just never be put into place in most cities; it's about as likely as Congress rescinding last year's welfare bill. That being the case, I think progressives, while not giving up on review boards, need to pursue and support other strategies. Aggressive minority recruitment is a must. For many years, departments didn't want people from, say, Bedford-Stuyvesant policing Bedford-Stuyvesant on the theory that the cops would have gone to school and church with the bad guys and would be either more lenient or susceptible to corruption. Maybe, but on balance, a black cop who grew up in Bed-Stuy walking the local beat there strikes me as a far better idea than having a white guy there who goes home to Rockland County forty miles away. Cops should be better educated—college requirements, specific study requirements in history and current events, should be mandatory. Of course, this means they should be better paid, which I'd also favor on the above conditions. These and other factors can help demilitarize police forces and make them into public service forces—Kelling's next big project, or so he said when I heard him talk.

Finally, my respondents don't seem to disagree too strenuously with my concluding point: That maybe the successes of Bratton-style policing can move the conversation out of the weary traditional right (let's crack heads) vs. traditional left (let's explore root causes) model, and maybe that movement can be in the direction of a solution that combines rigorous pursuit of public order with preventative social spending. That, especially given the expectation that crime will begin to rise again fairly soon, is not a bad place to position ourselves. □

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Nicolaus Mills

MONUMENTAL CORRECTNESS

The New FDR Memorial

It used to be, as the *New York Times* has nostalgically pointed out, that our monuments came in three easy-to-choose styles. There was Egyptian obelisk (the Washington Monument), traditional classic (the Jefferson Memorial), and standard equestrian (St. Gaudens's William Tecumseh Sherman). But in the age of postmodernism, the old monuments won't do. They seem dated, if not trite.

The problem is that there is no consensus on what to substitute for the monument design we have relied on for most of our history. Even Maya Lin's brilliantly successful Vietnam Memorial, with its descending black granite wall, hasn't escaped criticism. Despite its broad acceptance by Vietnam veterans and their families, critics have forced her stark memorial to share space with a flagpole and statues of infantrymen and female nurses.

In the case of the newest Washington monument, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, nothing is more apparent than our difficulty in finding the right form to memorialize a president. Presidential memorials have historically taken a long time to erect. It was eighty-six years before Washington got his; Lincoln had to wait fifty-seven years, and Roosevelt has had to wait fifty-two years. For FDR the waiting has added little, however, except a price tag of forty-eight million dollars.

The project dates back to 1946, when Congress introduced a resolution authorizing the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial Commission. The commission became official in 1955, and in 1959 Congress formally approved a site in West Potomac Park for the memorial. Then in 1974, after several design competitions, San Francisco architect Lawrence Halprin was chosen to design the memorial. In 1978, his plan was approved by both the FDR Memorial Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts, and finally in 1994 the building was begun by the William V. Walsh Construction Company of Rockville, Maryland.

Three years later, on May 2, 1997, the memorial was opened to the public in a ceremony in which President Clinton, on crutches as a result of a fall, stood in front of a statue of FDR and observed, "My fellow Americans, every time you think of Franklin Roosevelt, put aside your doubts, become more American like him." The newspaper photos of Clinton on crutches, towered over by a seated FDR, were moving, an implicit reminder of how much FDR had to overcome to exercise the leadership he did. But going through the seven-and-a-half-acre memorial—it is nearly three football fields in length—is a surprisingly unmoving experience.

The key to what awaits the visitor is reflected in the gift shop, a one-story building in front of the memorial's entrance. The star of the shop is FDR's Scottie, Fala. Here one can buy *The Official Fala Coloring Book*, *The True Story of Fala*, Fala the White House Dog pins, and the Fala, FDR's Friend, backpack. Given the nature of the Washington tourist trade, the Fala shelf is a shrewd marketing idea. A family visiting the memorial is far more likely to take home a Fala souvenir than a copy of Joseph Lash's massive biography, *Eleanor and Franklin*, or a copy of Doris Kearns Goodwin's account of the Roosevelts during World War II, *No Ordinary Time*.

Unfortunately, what lies behind the Fala

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marketing strategy is also what lies behind the aesthetics of the memorial: an excessive desire to please. In the case of the memorial, which has aroused intense protest from the handicapped because it failed to include a statue of FDR in his wheelchair, it is a desire that has been made still worse by the belief that these days the best way to be pleasing is with a massive blandness that converts FDR into a politically correct nineties liberal.

The core of the memorial consists of a series of twelve-foot-high granite walls that divide it into four open-air rooms that correspond to each of FDR's terms. It is these walls, adorned with quotations from FDR and constructed from six thousand tons of carnelian granite (enough to erect an eighty-story building), that guide the visitor through the memorial and spell out its character, despite the fact that the work of different sculptors—Robert Graham, George Segal, Neil Estern, and Leonard Baskin—is featured in each room.

The sense of being dwarfed and guided by the walls is set from the start, and no matter how hard one tries, there is no escaping their dominance. It is as if one were in a museum and the descriptions on the walls took up more space than the pictures on display. With the FDR Memorial, the problem is compounded by the choice of quotations. They include those every school child learns: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," "This generation of Americans has a rendezvous with destiny." But what ultimately shapes the quotations is the wish to make FDR sound like a politician attuned to the values of today's America.

The presentation of FDR as war president, as Leon Wieseltier in the *New Republic* and Charles Krauthammer in the *Washington Post* have argued, is typical of the memorial's sensibility. What we get in a room ostensibly dealing with FDR in the 1940s is a passage from a 1936 campaign speech he gave in Chautauqua, New York, in which he observed of World War I: "I have seen the dead in the mud. I have seen cities destroyed. . . . I hate war." The date of the speech is left out, and so is the fact that it does not refer to World War II. Designer Lawrence Halprin has acknowledged that the omissions here, as in the decision to avoid Roosevelt's characterization of the attack on Pearl Harbor as "a date that will live in infamy," were motivated by a sensitivity toward former enemies. "We carefully did not deal with the question of Nazism or fascism or any one country," Halprin told the press on the day the memorial opened.

The effect of such omissions isn't simply misplaced tact. It is a distortion of the moral outrage of a president who spoke openly of the "slaughters of Warsaw, Lidice, Kharov" as well as the "torture and murder by the Japanese" of noncombatants, while warning that the United States "will persevere in its efforts to rescue the victims of brutality of the Nazis and Japs." It isn't, moreover, simply the right that is entitled to protest the political correctness of the memorial. For liberals, too, the memorial's walls tell a misleading story. They give a sense that for the New Deal to succeed all FDR had to do was rouse voter compassion for the one-third of a nation that was "ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished." Missing is the notion that FDR had to overcome severe opposition and did not hesitate to characterize the entrenched wealthy who opposed him as "money changers" and "economic royalists," bent on trying to convince the electorate that "economic slavery was nobody's business."

If the sculpture scattered throughout the Roosevelt Memorial were powerful enough, then the message that the walls deliver might at least be neutralized. But rather than contesting the sensibility of the memorial's walls, the sculpture harmonizes with it. The one exception is the work of George Segal—three bronzes entitled "The Appalachian Farm Couple," "The Depression Bread Line," and "The Fireside Chat." They are typical Segal, with their emphasis on isolated men and women, worn down and made anonymous by the society around them. But in the context of the 1930s, they capture the destructiveness of the Great Depression and reflect how—by virtue of his voice and the radio—FDR was able to unite people who were otherwise isolated from each other.

But the pathos that Segal's sculpture casts over the memorial's second room cannot undo what surrounds it. Robert Graham's bronze relief of

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FDR triumphantly waving his top hat at his first inaugural, which opens the memorial, like Leonard Baskin's thirty-foot relief "The Funeral Cortege," which closes it, is deftly done, but provides nothing that we haven't seen in newsreels and photos of the time. Even the statue that has drawn the most attention, Neil Estern's nine-foot sculpture of a seated FDR, is strangely bland. It captures neither the jauntiness of FDR in 1933 nor the haunting thinness of FDR at the end of his life. It's simply big, and paired as it is with a smaller sculpture of Fala, it ends up being folksy.

The result is that by the time one gets to the end and encounters Estern's statue of Eleanor Roosevelt, looking like a Norman Rockwell grandmother, it is a relief to be done. I visited the memorial on a hot June Saturday, and to cool off I walked down to the Tidal Basin to rest under the Japanese cherry trees. Sitting by the basin, I was struck with the quietness of Washington, even during the tourist season. The memorial is by contrast noisy. In virtually every room there are waterfalls. Except for the one next to a wall dealing with the Tennessee Valley Authority, they don't, however, have any direct historical link to FDR's life. They are there to provide solace to the visitor. But there are so many of them, and they have been designed to fall so heavily on the rocks below, that they distract attention from whatever is at hand.

As I sat beneath the cherry trees and stared across the Tidal Basin, I could see the Washington Monument on my left and the Jefferson Memorial on my right. The FDR Memorial, triangled between the two, seemed to be in a perfect location. Franklin Roosevelt was in essence the father of modern America, and as much as anyone, he established the politics of social caring that nowadays represents us at our best. But a half hour later, standing on the other side of the Tidal Basin, I realized I could not see the FDR Memorial. It is hidden by the cherry trees in front of it. Unlike the other presidential memorials in Washington, it is not going to be a site one can point out at a distance.

For FDR, that invisibility would, I think, be welcome. Four years before he died, he told Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter that he would be happy with a memorial the size of his desk. "I want it to be plain, without any ornamentation," he said. This invisibility is, however, the only aspect of his memorial that would truly please FDR. The rest not only fails to catch his complexity and willingness to court controversy—"I welcome their hatred," he proudly declared in 1936 of those he considered "the forces of selfishness." Most of all, it fails to capture the context of his life.

On April 13, 1943, two years before his death, FDR triumphantly observed at the dedication of architect John Russell Pope's Pantheon-inspired Jefferson Memorial, "We judge him by the application of his philosophy to the circumstances of his life. But in such applying we come to understand that his life was given for those deeper values that persist throughout all time." FDR deserves a memorial that would help us remember that the same was true of him. □

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Dennis Wrong

SWING POLITICS

Is There Still a Leftward Drift?

Nearly twenty-five years ago I published in *Dissent* (Winter 1974) a theory of a left/right rhythm in democratic politics—a rhythm that over time produces a leftward drift because conservative administrations on returning to power tend not to reverse the reforms enacted by their left-wing predecessors.* Left parties are initially at a disadvantage that I called "mobilization lag" because their potential supporters from the lower classes are less politically aware and thus less likely either to vote at all or to vote for a party that speaks for their class interests. Eventually, however, the left mobilizes a sufficient constitutency to win elections and carry out part of its program. When I first presented this theory at a *Dissent* editorial board meeting, Robert Heilbroner described it by the metaphor of an automobile jack: the alternation of left and right parties in office resembled a cyclical up-and-down motion within an ever-upward linear progression corresponding to what I had called "leftward drift."

The solid victories of Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in Britain caused me to have second thoughts. After Reagan's first victory, in 1980, I speculated in *Dissent* (Fall 1981) that perhaps each period in which a left reformist administration realized some of its policies might result in the reduction of its potential constituency, the reforms having appeased the discontented groups that had previously backed the left. In addition to rendering them more susceptible to the traditional noneconomic patriotic, moral, and ethnic-racial appeals that are the stock-in-trade of the right, more of them would have been elevated into the middle class, and moderated their economic interests in a conservative direction. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Seymour Martin Lipset were invited by the editors of *Dissent* to comment on my argument (*Dissent*, Winter 1982). My theory had attempted to synthesize their views: Schlesinger's and his father's that there were regular liberal/conservative "tides" in American politics, and Lipset's that the politics of democracies were subject to a "democratic class struggle" between the working and lower classes and the richer, more powerful classes. Both Lipset and Schlesinger thought I had attached too much significance to Reagan's election and reaffirmed their original views, predicting that the Democrats, armed with a new reformist program, would be restored to power by the end of the eighties (Schlesinger) and that increasing unemployment would shortly redound to their electoral advantage (Lipset). After Reagan's second victory, I enlarged upon the revisions of my theory (*Dissent*, Spring 1985), which now seemed even more plausible in its pessimism about the prospects of the left.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the electoral successes of the right suggested that leftward drift may have come to an end. Moreover, unlike previous right-wing administrations, the Thatcher and Reagan administrations assailed the reforms instituted by the left. This was even more true of the congressional Republicans led by Newt Gingrich after the Democrats lost control of Congress in 1994. The first Republican-controlled Congress in half a century mounted a fierce legislative attack on the welfare state reforms of the New Deal of the 1930s and the Great Society of the 1960s. The leftward drift may turn out to have been a historical phenomenon peculiar to the late nineteenth and the first two-thirds of the twentieth century rather than a trend inherent in the politics of democracy based on universal suffrage in class-divided societies.

*My fullest statement of the theory is in my book *Power: Its Forms, Bases, and Uses* (Harper & Row, 1979; University of Chicago Press, 1988; Transaction Publishers, 1995), chapter 8, pp. 197-217.

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Clearly, Western democratic societies have not ceased to be class-divided: indeed, they have experienced increases in economic inequality since the end of their sustained period of post-war economic growth. However, the reaction under conditions of lower economic growth against the high costs imposed by the welfare state, which require relatively high rates of taxation, has not been confined to Britain and the United States. Nor, especially in the United States, has there been increased lower-class turnout and greater support for the left party.

Yet from the vantage point of the late 1990s, the theory looks more credible than it did as recently as 1994. In the United States, Britain, and France, dominance by the more conservative of the two major parties has ended. The Democrats have won two successive presidential elections despite losing control over Congress. In Britain, the Labour Party, after eighteen years out of office, defeated the Tories in a landslide unparalleled since the early nineteenth century. The left was returned to office decisively in the most recent French election. In Italy, the end of communism has ended the pattern of government by largely center-right coalitions and led to the electoral victory of a center-left coalition that includes reformed communists. The change from a proportional to a single-member majority electoral system is likely to create a sharper left/right division of the Italian electorate. The American labor movement under new AFL-CIO leadership has adopted a more aggressive policy both in organizing unorganized workers and in supporting Democratic candidates for political office. Insofar as women, a slight majority of the electorate, are a relatively deprived and discontented group, the widening gender gap in voting indicates the persistence of a reservoir of potential voters available for mobilization by the left party. Strong protests against efforts by conservative administrations to cut back on the welfare state have occurred in Canada and Germany in addition to sparking the revival of the left parties in the United States, Britain, and France.

It would be premature, however, to conclude that these developments confirm the persistence of the left/right spiral trend. The relatively left parties that have returned to office do not advocate radical changes or even ambitious expansions of existing welfare states. The recent favorable prospects of parties of the moderate left do not even contradict the view that the reservoir of discontented voters on which the left has traditionally relied has been depleted by past economic growth and the achievement of welfare states. Opinion polls in the United States show twice as many people identifying themselves as "conservative" as "liberal," although the number of self-proclaimed "moderates" is even larger.

So long as two or more parties compete electorally, the electorate after a long period of rule by one of them is disposed to perceive the other, which will have adapted its policies to the prevailing mood, as having become an entirely credible alternative. The same dynamic that produced a leftward drift will also preserve a rightward turn after right-wing parties have instituted policies of an anti-egalitarian nature. It has been said that Clinton is to Reagan-Bush what Nixon was to Johnson-Kennedy, Nixon having continued the reforming impulses of the Great Society in such areas as affirmative action and environmental protection just as Clinton has accepted the fiscal austerity and trimming of the welfare state favored by Republicans. Tony Blair won his landslide in Britain after transforming his party into "New Labour," winning repeal of its commitment to full socialism and pledging not to undo the changes in the direction of privatization and limitations on the power of the trade unions achieved by Margaret Thatcher. One might conclude that the alternation of left and right parties in office still holds, but not the leftward drift previously postulated as an effect of the working of the rhythm over time.

Still, there are strong grounds for believing in the original theory. When the generation born in the immediate postwar decades reaches retirement age, all industrial nations will face acute difficulties in maintaining existing welfare entitlements, and left/right divisions between the parties may well be intensified. This is particularly likely in the United States, where the so-called "baby boomers" are greatest in

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number and the conservative anti-tax and anti-government orientation of the Republican Party became even more pronounced in the 1980s and 1990s. In Europe, the Maastricht Treaty imposes restrictions on social programs and budget deficits to the same effect. It is far from evident that problems such as increased income inequality, loss of high-paying jobs, reduced trade-union power, and fiscal pressure on welfare entitlements will be overcome in the near future. If high rates of economic growth have in the past been a solvent of class and left/right political conflicts—"a rising tide lifts all boats"—and have rendered high taxation for redistributive welfare measures relatively painless, the end of these conditions may very well lead to an intensification of conflict. The rhythm theory might therefore hold under conditions differing markedly from those prevailing when it was initially formulated—conditions that could prove more threatening to the stability of constitutional democracy. It is often forgotten that our experience with political democracy under conditions of universal suffrage is limited to less than a century, so history may still surprise us as to how it works. It is in any case obviously premature to believe that history has ended where the processes of political democracy are concerned. □

Steven Vogel

GRADES AND MONEY

When I was a college student, back in the early seventies, people I knew made it a point not to talk about their grades. To this day, I have no idea how my friends did in college—they all graduated, which I guess means they did well enough. Today some are lawyers, doctors, businesspeople, software designers, bed-and-breakfast hosts, and so forth, but I'd be hard-pressed to guess who were the straight-A students among them and who barely squeaked through.

Me, I'm a college professor, teaching philosophy at a small private liberal-arts college in the Midwest. And what strikes me today is how different my students are: they talk about their grades *all the time*. They argue and gossip about them, complain to me and my colleagues about them, orient their whole college lives, as far as I can tell, around them. I say this not to sound self-righteous or holier than they—openness about grades is probably healthier than the kind of highfalutin' squeamishness we exhibited—but rather to explain the difficulty I feel in really *understanding* grades, in grasping what exactly they are and what they're for. My students are much better at it than I am. When they come into my office to ask (usually in despair or anger) why they got the grade they did in my class, I'm always a little confused, and a little embarrassed, for them and for me: *why* exactly are we talking about this? I always think. Of course it's particularly embarrassing because I've been teaching, and assigning grades, for twelve years, and I guess from my students' point of view it's the most important thing I do. (As far as I'm concerned, it's just a twice-yearly annoyance, and furthermore an impossibility: what exactly *is* the difference between a B- and a C+? Damned if I know.)

No, I don't understand grades that well. But when I read last winter that President Clinton was proposing to grant tax deductions for tuition to all college students who maintain B averages, something about it felt wrong to me, and I started to wonder why.

Everybody in the world of higher education, and most people outside, too, pays lip service to the idea that the point of education is, well, to *get educated*. It's the learning that's the goal, we say, not the grade; we want our students to learn about history and philosophy and literature and science and art and mathematics be-

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cause doing so will make them better people, better citizens of a democracy. The point is to develop talents, attitudes, habits of mind that are good in themselves, that will improve their lives (and the lives of their fellow citizens); we say that education itself is such a good. If this is true, then grades must play a secondary role: they can serve a motivating function, but ought never to be mistaken for the goal of the process as such.

This is what we *say*, but it is not the way we act, and it is certainly not the way most of our students see the situation. For them the goal of going to class, writing papers, taking exams, and so on, is simply the grade itself. When I ask a student why a higher grade in a course is so important, I'm often told it's because it will increase the grade point average (GPA); when I ask why the GPA is important, I'm told that it's necessary for getting into a good postgraduate school, which is in turn important for getting a good job, which is important for making lots of money. Everything is important *for* something else, in this litany; nothing is important for itself. Except, of course, money.

It's money that's the crux of it. An important part of what we're teaching in college—not what we intend to teach, but what we do teach nonetheless—is how to think about money, what its relation is to value and effort and self-worth. Anyone entering this society surely needs to know all this; it's arguably the most important skill our culture demands. But of course we don't use real money to teach this skill—that would be too expensive and risky. Instead, we use grades. In my college, like most others, grades *are* money. They're the currency around which everything revolves.

What grades *ought* to be is a report, nothing more: how did the student do, how much did he or she learn, how much were his or her skills and critical self-consciousness and knowledge of the world expanded? A serious student might indeed want to know that at the end of the course—might want it to check his or her work, might even want to use it as a carrot or a stick. But we don't use grades as a report; we use them, in myriad ways, as money. We talk about "docking" students' grades for turning in papers late or missing classes, like finance companies assessing a late fee; we offer "contracts," whereby students are promised certain grades for doing a certain amount of work. My dean tells me that the syllabus I give to students at the beginning of the semester *is*, legally speaking, a contract, and has been interpreted by the courts as such—it must specify how I will calculate grades at the end of the term, and woe to me if I say that the final exam will count 30 percent and later change my mind and make it 35 percent. Students expect that their grade will indicate the amount of time they have put into the course, as if they were hourly workers, and many faculty agree that it's important to consider "effort" when they "award" grades.

The relationship between me and the students is really an exchange relationship: they provide me with work of a certain quality and I reward it—pay for it—by giving them a certain grade. This all seems so obvious to everyone that it's never even remarked upon, even though it is entirely different from, and even incompatible with, what we normally say about the relationship in the classroom—which is that it's one where I'm a teacher helping my students learn. Their learning isn't something they "give" me, not something I'm supposed to pay them for. Nothing real is exchanged in the classroom, and so the model of money is out of place there. But we're all so used to it everywhere else that we don't even notice. Yet applying it in the classroom produces perverse results.

If grades are money, and if the product for which they pay is learning, then it's perfectly rational for students to try to minimize that learning while maximizing their "return," and looking for loopholes or strategies that will produce the best possible grade for the least possible effort. And they do: I'm constantly amazed by the mathematically sophisticated understanding students instantly develop of whatever new grading scheme I announce, and by their ability to find ambiguities and possible avenues for creative interpretation in it. Their incentive is thus *not* to learn, or to learn as little as possible while maintaining a good GPA—while I am placed in the position of having to figure out new ways to trick them into learning by designing ingenious

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new ways to grade.

On the faculty side, the situation is more pleasant, if no less perverse. If grades are money, for us they are funny money, Monopoly money, because it costs us nothing to give them out—and no more, except in terms of our self-image, to give out an A than a C. Thus we get to play out our own fantasies about money—we can be skinflints, stingily giving out one or two A's a year, or spendthrifts, spreading high grades everywhere, or, like that guy on the show about the millionaire, looking for needy cases (troubled students, applicants to tough graduate programs) upon whom to generously bestow our wealth. Since we all want to be loved, and since the students seem to care so damned much, the misers are few. The result, as any economist will tell you, is inflation; in many of the best colleges the average grade is around A-.

If grades are money, then learning is a cost—a painful effort one undergoes only for the reward it produces. That the learning or the effort might itself be the reward—which is what we *say* about education—makes no sense or is sentimental rubbish. The effect of turning grades into money is to commodify learning, making it appear as something that is painful in itself and useful only for what it can buy. This is exactly the opposite of what education ought to be about.

I point all this out to my students when I can, often giving a heartfelt speech on the first day of the course about what I think grades are and how they ought not to be taken so seriously. The students look at me as though I'm crazy.

In the last few years, my college has begun to offer merit scholarships, which is to say financial aid to very good students without requiring them to prove financial need; this is one of the ways we have helped to build up an excellent honors program that has been a real boon to the institution. But one characteristic of these scholarships is that to keep them students must maintain a certain GPA—generally a B average and sometimes even higher. Here the analogy between money and grades is not merely an analogy: a B can now literally be worth thousands of dollars. One day a student came to me for advice on her course schedule and informed me that, although she'd like to try a philosophy course sometime, she couldn't risk it because she wasn't sure what her grade would be. When I tried out one of my lines about how "the important thing is learning, not grades," she looked back at me fiercely and explained that if her GPA dropped even a little bit she would lose her scholarship, worth ten thousand dollars; how dare I tell her grades aren't important? I had no response. She was right. She kept the scholarship, and never learned philosophy.

By tying grades to money, we give students incentives not to take risks. Very good and well-prepared first-year students often come to me to explain that they would rather take Calculus One than Calculus Two, even though they have already taken calculus in high school—or rather, *because* they have: that way they are guaranteed a good grade. These honors students are in some ways the worst in terms of their fixation on grades and their constant and creative search to find ways to manipulate the system: their skill at doing so, after all, has gotten them where they are today.

When I heard that President Clinton was offering tax deductions for B's, I imagined my own college's program turned into national policy, and I blanched. Did we really want to write the current grading system into tax law?

As it turned out, that aspect of the proposal disappeared in the final tax bill. Everybody seemed a little dubious about the idea of turning college professors into agents of national tax policy. But the deeper questions were never asked: about why we so easily accept the equation between grades and money that the proposal implied, about what grades really are for and why we take them for granted. What was wrong with Clinton's well-meaning proposal was that it sent the wrong message. Few noticed because we are all so in thrall to instrumentalism and commodification—and because we no longer feel sure what education is for or why we value it. We let grades count as money—we let education count as money—because money, nowadays, is the only value we know. □

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Abraham Brumberg

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF THE BUND

Of the two Jewish movements that celebrate their centenaries this year—Zionism and the Bund—the first, founded at a glittering ceremony in Basle, Switzerland, in August 1897, can surely boast of greater historical achievements than its coeval, formed by thirteen representatives of Jewish socialist groups meeting conspiratorially in a small, nondescript house in Vilna two months later.

Zionism's extraordinary achievements include, first and foremost, the creation of a Jewish state and of a haven for millions of homeless and persecuted Jews. Israel's democracy—despite some grievous shortcomings—is the most vibrant in the Middle East, and so is its growing economy. The revival of Hebrew, hitherto exclusively the language of the Book, and the rise of a modern Hebrew literature, are minor attendant miracles, too.

The Bund cannot boast of similar achievements. Its dream of a socialist revolution that would free both Jew and non-Jew economically, politically, and nationally, proved a mirage. Its program of cultural autonomy for the Yiddish-speaking Jews in Eastern Europe and—later on—America also foundered. The ultimate blow to the Bund, and also to Zionism's hope of a mass exodus from Europe, was the destruction of East European Jewry. But whereas Zionism could supplant its original dream with an even greater commitment to nation building, the Holocaust marked the end of the Bund's political aspirations.

And yet the Bund fills a magnificent page in modern Jewish history. The Bund was a socialist party committed to its "revolutionary" ideals yet prepared to overlook doctrinal niceties when its major goals were at stake. Its pragmatism eventually made the Bund the single most powerful Jewish political party in interwar Poland, allied with the Polish socialists in a common struggle against fascism and anti-Semitism in their country.

Throughout the years, the Bund remained admirably united and democratic—in stark contrast to the communist parties with their worship of "democratic centralism" (no democracy, lots of centralism). In addition, the Bund worked diligently to strengthen the domain of Yiddish by publishing journals and papers in that language, founding educational institutions, and supporting the growing ranks of Yiddish writers. During the war, its activities in the ghettos and in the anti-Nazi resistance movement were nothing short of amazing. So was the fortitude displayed by the Bund in carrying on after the war, until it was crushed by the Polish communist regime in 1948.

The Bund's accomplishments have been striking in the United States, too. It was instrumental in creating organizations such as the Workmen's Circle and the Jewish Labor Committee, in contributing to the vigor of the Jewish trade union movement, and in sustaining the position of Yiddish (the *Daily Forward,* in the first decades of this century, was largely a creature of the Bund, and its Yiddish weekly is edited now by Joseph Mlotek, a devoted Bundist since his childhood in Poland before the war).

The Bund left an indelible imprint on the secular American Jewish community as a whole. Wittingly or not, the Zionist movement has adopted the Bund's principle of *doyikayt* (roughly "hereness"), that is, preserving Jewish life wherever Jews live throughout the once disdained Diaspora, as a natural corollary to its commitment to the Jewish state.

At present, only a small minority of Bundists remain, yet their idealism and energy are undiminished as they maintain their activities in a number of countries, and continue to publish *Unser Tsayt* (*Our Time*) in New York. Their history and their achievements are close to the hearts of democratic socialists, and that is why we at *Dissent* are pleased and honored to salute the members of the Bund, on its one-hundredth anniversary, as comrades in the unending struggle for a more decent world. □

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Gina Neff

HOW WORRIED SHOULD WE BE?

The Anxious Euphoria of the Business Press

In 1908, in Paris, Emile Durkheim and Charles Mathieu Limousin debated which was the supreme social science: economics or sociology? In the course of the debate, Durkheim challenged the immutability of economic laws. "The value of things," he said, "in fact depends not only upon their objective properties, but also upon the opinion one forms of them." He lost. The reporter in the *Bulletin de la société d'économie politique* summed up the debate this way: "Political economy occupies the first place among the social sciences; it alone rests upon a basis that is indestructible and positive, and its laws are immutable, whatever the variations of opinion."

Not much has changed in the past eighty-nine years. A look at the world's premier business glossies—*Forbes, Fortune,* and *Business Week*—reveals a culture that Limousin would have admired. However, in their pages we can see opinions of the value of things—not merely investments but a currency of political values—being formed. Dripping with faith in neoclassical economics' natural superiority and political neutrality, each magazine reaffirms the idea that economic laws are inevitable and irresistible. Their dogmatic wisdom helps to explain why even in this undeniable boom—with unemployment edging under 5 percent, and real profits up 14 percent—American workers expect (and receive) smaller and smaller shares of corporate profits.

Business magazines can hardly be blamed for not sharing the left's ideas about justice. But their sincerely-held beliefs in the market's perfection have put these magazines in an interesting bind. In its hour of triumph—with Washington having granted nearly all of the Chamber of Commerce's policy wishes—the business press is left alone, as it were, with the tiger it has helped to unleash. With no more state interference to rail against, these magazines now exist largely to massage—and sometimes stoke—their affluent readers' anxieties about the brave new world of downsizing, Brazilianesque wage disparities, and the management culture of "permanent revolution." They approach this project from very different angles: *Forbes* with euphoric triumphalism, *Fortune* with boys'-club hero worship, and *Business Week* with earnest hand-wringing. But all three have been left with the task of helping their readers not to feel guilty or distressed in this, the best of all possible economic worlds.

Forbes is easy to hate. It makes no bones about its evangelical view of capitalism: in each issue it sets an aphorism from Malcolm or B.C. Forbes tastefully alongside a reader-submitted Biblical quotation. But the magazine's only true religion is that expounded by the former, not the latter. With *Forbes*, "freedom pays." One recent "charticle" ranks 115 countries in order of relative economic freedom. The moral we are to draw is that "per capita GDP correlates very closely with . . . freedom rankings." The freedom chart's only "A+," Hong Kong, does indeed have the world's highest GDP per capita. But the chart as a whole hardly seems to correlate with GDP: Malaysia, the Philippines, and Mauritius are all in the top ten; Guatemala, Indonesia, and Uruguay place ahead of all the Scandinavian countries.

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The assumptions behind the chart exemplify the *Forbes*ian philosophy: what's good for the free market is good for everybody, and what's bad for the free market should be avoided at all costs. The charticle, though, is not merely a political comment—it's included as part of the magazine's annual Investment Guide. The not-so-subtle hint? Russia, El Salvador, Tanzania, Peru, and the Dominican Republic would all be good places to put money. Banking on dictators and sweatshops is good business, and our American habit of intervening in labor markets with "costly" anti-discrimination laws isn't.

Not surprisingly, personal responsibility and trickle-down prosperity are the only solutions acceptable to *Forbes*. Anything that smacks of collective action is derisively mocked as "socialism." Public school education? A "monopoly held by the teachers' unions and the educational establishment," bloated with unnecessary "educrats." Sustainable development? "Fundamentally fascist," and "a smokescreen for socialism, where the government substitutes its will for that of the owner." The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the new EEOC Guidelines on Psychiatric Disabilities? "Laws that subordinate life, liberty, or property to vague notions of 'the common good' inevitably lead to injustice." The state of Hawaii? "Mired in a half-baked form of socialism."

Forbes loves the rags-to-riches story: every issue seems to feature a new North Dakotan centimillionaire we've never heard of, a modest fellow who owns only one suit, eats at Red Lobster, and grows two billion pounds of potatoes every year. Last year's special Executive Compensation issue—an annual feature devoted to ogling the salaries of business warriors—predictably whined that CEOs are unjustly criticized for their fat paychecks. "Economics," writes associate editor Dyan Machan, "is not about fairness; it's about productivity." Tellingly, though, *Forbes* declines to endorse each and every CEO salary. "For us, CEOs who are really entrepreneurs make the best case that they deserve their riches," like Green Tree Financial's Lawrence M. Coss, who earned over $100 million last year alone. Michael Eisner, the third-highest paid man in America, doesn't: "Yes, Disney shareholders have profited handsomely since Eisner took over in 1984, but isn't Eisner more of a steward/exploiter of assets than a creator/builder of assets? How much risk did Eisner assume in taking command of this gold-standard brand?" (Not to defend Eisner's indefensible pay package, but if risk is to be compensated and being a "steward" isn't, where does that put the average productive worker?)

If *Forbes* is about the cult of growth, *Fortune* is all about the cult of heroism behind the company man—like its Time Warner cousin *People*, it says glowing things about celebrities and finds heroism in the ordinary Joe who's just trying to earn a coupla million bucks. Were the men of corporate America more attractive, you could mistake *Fortune*'s covers for a male version of *Glamour*: close-ups of smooth-faced white models. *Forbes* annually tracks executive compensation; *Fortune* continually justifies it with the notion that a single man's managerial acumen ensures the success or failure of a company. In its pages, companies cease to be organizations, transformed instead into arenas for a star's whims, and business reporting is reduced to gossip: "His success, in part, is innate: He's the kind of guy who sets a goal and reaches it." "[He] faces the toughest challenge of a charmed career." "Will he . . . restore growth and glory?"

The *Fortune* 500, the magazine's annual index of the largest companies, has become synonymous with having made it. (Just one and a half of those five hundred CEO's, by the way, are women.) The ranking is done by revenues, "still the purest measure of importance," not profits or market value of companies. The size of employment has little correlation with the size of the revenues or profits, and it should come as no surprise that out of the fifty most profitable companies only fifteen make the cut for the fifty biggest employers and only thirty-eight of the top fifty employers are in the *Fortune* 100 for revenues.

Still, *Fortune* claims bigger is better for everyone:

> Today, of course, every CEO talks about creating shareholder wealth—it has become part of the parlance of business. And rare is the CEO who doesn't

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> have a big stake in his company—40 percent of senior management compensation now comes from options . . . compared with about one-quarter in 1984. Yes, options are often abused, and CEOs can become too obsessed with their stock price. Still, we're far better off with executives caring about creating shareholder wealth than not.

Now that CEOs are shareholders, they're working harder to please the stock market, willing to slash a firm's payroll and long-term growth prospects in order to pocket profits off the company's stock performance. Those glamorous CEOs who "cared passionately" about the stock market value of their firms are driving the spectacular gains in the stock market value of the country's largest firms. According to this analysis, General Electric's 1,155 percent increase in stock market value over the last fifteen years owes more to the leadership of CEO Jack Welch than to the thousands of jobs sacrificed to the market gods or to the mutual funds of the baby boomers bidding up the prices of blue chip stocks in the hopes of eking out a retirement.

An aptly titled feature, "These *Are* the Good Old Days" (June 9, 1997), praises ours as the best economy ever:

> All the economic indicators point to continued expansion—at least through this year and maybe even the next. After that? Well, there's no law that says an economic expansion must end—though it's always happened before.

If an economy this strong isn't helping everyone, there's likely to be a good reason:

> A study by Rand Corp. economist Lynn Karoly, for example, found that those in the top 10 percent of the income distribution saw their wealth rise 11 percent between 1973 and 1993. But the real income of families in the bottom tenth of income distribution fell almost 16 percent in the same period. The main reason: Changes in technology have left behind those without skills to adapt.

Such problems are simply given a gloss that makes them seem surmountable (particularly if the economy continues to grow: "While inequality has certainly widened during this expansion, there is hope, at least, that this rising tide is finally beginning to lift all American boats") rather than an inherent part of the new economy:

> Not that it's a *perfect* economy. Eleven percent of America's families live in poverty. Many others have suffered a decline in real income since 1989. And most American individuals and companies still have legitimate economic complaints, such as too-high taxes or overly restrictive regulations.

Choosing to look at household poverty statistics instead of the much more depressing child poverty statistics (one in five) makes it easier to equate what's happening to the bottom of society with the irksome annoyances, like obeying laws and paying taxes, that the top must endure. And focusing on the booming Dow as an indication of value in the economy makes it easy to forget that one of the reasons a stock's price jumps in the first place is the stock market's approval of mass-layoffs. In "Bill Gates: Richest American Ever" (August 4, 1997) the deluded rosy outlook continues:

> Anyone can ride alongside Gates in the Microsoft rocket too, if not as an individual shareholder, then through mutual funds. On paper, the gap in financial circumstances between citizens in the middling ranks and the very, very wealthiest person has never been greater—yet psychologically, the gap does not seem so large, simply because now we nobodies get to tag along too.

Business Week is far less dependent on its readers' fantasies of massive wealth or "riding the Microsoft rocket." Sure, *Business Week* sometimes hypes fancy sports cars, but it will also publish a charming essay on the joys of junkers. *Business Week* is the friendly, hard-working American middle-class business magazine.

And like the hard-working American middle class, *Business Week* is a terribly anxious creature. Every few months seems to bring a new cover package on wage disparities or chaotic job markets. Like *Sports Illustrated*, *Business Week* roots for its favorite teams and cheers for good-old-fashioned sportsmanship and a wholesome notion of fairness. There's a section on "Social Issues," and the "Workplace" section is likely to feature union news.

This corporate-liberal slant is precisely what makes *Business Week* the most maddening of the lot. The magazine embodies big business's nostalgia for the stability and certainty it knew during the Fordist era. In its own blinkered way,

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Business Week appreciates the need for a social contract and for prosperity to be broadly distributed. It even found a few kind words for France's recent return to socialist leadership: "The French electorate is being rational in opposing the anti-growth, austerity measures forcefed to Europe by an arrogant political and bureaucratic elite sitting in Bonn, Paris, and Brussels.... Without growth and jobs, the people of Europe aren't going to buy into the concept of One Europe. Nor should they."

But the magazine's Fordist nostalgia is entirely toothless. They implore Brussels (and the Federal Reserve) to adopt "pro-growth" policies; and that is the extent of their agitation. The New Deal may have been fine for its time, but what we must understand, *Business Week* tells us again and again, is that "the rules have changed":

> [B]ig changes in the dynamics of growth are turning the tenets of conventional economic wisdom on their heads. Globalization and high technology are changing the business cycle in unforeseen ways. There is little pricing power for corporations and hardly any for unions. The best explanation we have is that a new business cycle is determining America's destiny. Information technology is replacing autos and housing as the driving force in the economy, while global markets influence capital flows, price and wage pressures, and profits. . . . In this strangest of times, all the evidence indicates that it pays to err on the side of growth.

As an account of economic changes, this is unobjectionable. The problem is that *Business Week*, no less than *Fortune* or *Forbes*, urges its readers to believe that "in this strangest of times" everything will work out for the best, so long as the free market is allowed to work its magic. No serious post-Keynesian reform is feasible, and no American institutions cause serious harm. In a recent article on landmines in Cambodia, *Business Week* takes pains to paint two makers of landmine components, Motorola and Hughes, as socially responsible businesses, and mentions the U.S. government only once—as a leader behind a business reponsibility law. An essay on the U.S./Mexican border describes atrocious conditions in *maquiladoras*, but a column by the University of Chicago's Gary Becker explains complacently that "financial inducements" will solve Latin America's child-labor problem.

"Government statistics may not capture rising productivity," *Business Week* informs us, "but healthy corporate profits at a time of little pricing power do. It is the Dow, the S&P 500, and NASDAQ that are telling us old assumptions should be challenged in the New Economy."

Of course, *Business Week* said that in the spring of 1987, too. Volatile stock prices and a crash in the price of metals and bonds preceded one of the worst stock market crashes in history. A cover from an issue 10 years ago asking the jittery investor "How Worried Should You Be?" looks very similar to a cover this spring, "Strong Growth, Little Inflation, Low Unemployment: How Long Can This Last?" The *Business Week* answer in both cases is the same: "If a Correction Comes, It May Be Short and Sweet" (April 6, 1987) ends, "if the market rally shorts out, it won't take long to get the power flowing again." And this from the same issue: "Of course many investors are glum because they can't see enough oomph in the economy to overpower interest-rate and dollar woes....the long-awaited pickup in profits from leaner and meaner companies is starting to materialize. So while large numbers of investors are dwelling on the negatives, the bull market has plenty of room to run."

This kind of cheering for a failed system, for an expansion that has been hard on everyone who still works for a living and harder still on those who can't, has gotten us into this mess. Alfred Chandler, a Harvard business historian, saw the difference between the free-wheeling market and those who manage it: "In many sectors of the economy the visible hand of managment replaced what Adam Smith refered to as the invisible hand of the market." It's time the rest of us realize the business press, in praising the powers of the market, has little to tell us about the visible hand that is now in our pockets. □

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Ellen Willis

THEIR LIBERTARIANISM —AND OURS

LIBERTARIANISM: A PRIMER, by David Boaz. Free Press, 1997. 314 pp. $23.00.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A LIBERTARIAN: A PERSONAL INTERPRETATION, by Charles Murray. Broadway Books, 1997. 178 pp. $20.00.

Those of us who call ourselves left libertarians feel pretty lonely these days. While the very word "libertarian" has become a synonym for "radical free marketeer," the mainstream of the American left—defined broadly for the purposes of this essay as the party of economic and social equality—seems content to cede both the word and the concept to the right. At best the contemporary left, with few exceptions, defends particular liberties and challenges particular repressive laws and policies while ignoring the structures of unfreedom built into institutions like the state, the corporation, the family, and the church. At worst it attacks "excessive" liberty as a mere extension of capitalist individualism, an offense to communal values, and/or a rationale for maintaining the position of dominant social groups. Most leftists are uncritically statist, merely complaining that the government is controlled by the wrong people and doesn't do enough of the right things. And though the left of course wants to redistribute corporate profits to workers, it shows little interest in attacking the authoritarian structure of the workplace or the puritanical assumptions of the work ethic.

Except for a few nanoseconds during the sixties, individual freedom has always been a hard sell on the left. But in the embattled, dike-plugging, circle-the-wagons present, dissident voices are ever fewer and fainter. Even as the state becomes steadily more impotent and subservient to transnational capital, leftists are concentrating most of their meager energy on struggling to enlist state power in their behalf, whether to defend social welfare programs and affirmative action or to punish racist and sexist behavior. All too often, the soundtrack to this agenda consists of a whiny lecture about selfishness, meanness, and greed versus compassion, decency, and justice, as if America's problem were moral deficiency, rather than a declining standard of living or an increasingly repressive culture, and the solution were getting government to pull up our collective socks.

It's no wonder that the public prefers the right's language of freedom. Conservatives' distaste for government and for ideological curbs on free expression may be selectively applied; their celebration of free enterprise may be a rationale for ruthless class warfare; yet they speak to Americans' deepening feelings of entrapment and suppression in a way the left refuses or doesn't know how to do. Ironically, many leftists are all too eager to pander to the socially conservative values they imagine (erroneously) are the key to majority support, while dismissing libertarianism out of hand, despite its wide appeal. In reality, I'm convinced, the left has no hope of seriously influencing the public conversation unless it counters the right's conception of liberty with its own compelling vision of a free society.

These books by David Boaz, executive vice president of the right-libertarian Cato Institute, and Charles Murray, who needs no introduction, are a good place to start. Together they do a fair job of articulating the dominant themes of right-wing anti-statism. Boaz's "primer" attempts a broad overview of libertarian philosophy, which he defines as a strict construction of classical liberalism based on a few first principles: individuals have the inalienable right to live as they

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choose so long as they respect the equal rights of others; property rights are the foundation of freedom and must not be abridged; "Free markets are the economic system of free individuals"; government's role should be limited to prohibiting force and fraud, enforcing contracts, and providing for the national defense.

Murray is also a staunch advocate of minimal government, untrammeled property rights, and free market economics (if slightly more willing than Boaz to allow exceptions for a limited number of public goods). Adopting the style of a lecturer intent on making a few homely points to an audience slightly low on the bell curve, he devotes the meat of his book to statistics purporting to show that every social improvement government has supposedly made would have happened anyway, and to "thought experiments" detailing how his proposals for economic deregulation, abolition of antidiscrimination laws, and so on might actually work. But he only reluctantly adopts the libertarian label—he would rather call himself a liberal, had the word not been appropriated by proponents of "an expansive government and the welfare state"—and indeed it hardly jibes with his professed admiration for Edmund Burke and his communitarian belief in "the indispensable roles that tradition and the classical virtues play in civic life."

Unlike Boaz, who genuinely seems to believe in civil liberties for dissidents and minorities, Murray basically defines freedom as the right of the conformist ("an ordinary human being making an honest living and minding his own business") to be left alone. He is especially concerned that landlords, employers, families, and other private parties not be deprived of "freedom of association" (that is, freedom to discriminate) and its corollary, freedom to enforce social and moral norms without state interference. For Murray, the absolute right of property owners to exclude from their premises anyone they find objectionable is the community's best defense against drugs, pornography, and other "obnoxious" practices. His main quarrel with government is its propensity to overrule traditional structures of authority in favor of individual rights and, worse, undermine those structures with welfare programs that allow unwed mothers and other such delinquents to survive. Like Boaz, he endorses "freedom of personal behavior" in the absence of force or fraud. But while this freedom comes first on Boaz's list, Murray mentions it last, on the grounds that it's of little practical consequence, since few people actually aspire to take advantage of it by testing social limits. (And if they did, in Murray's utopia, their parents, neighbors, landlords, and bosses, unimpeded by state-mandated tolerance or state subsidies for "irresponsible" behavior, would soon set them straight.)

In the end, though, these differences are more rhetorical than real. Both authors subscribe to the fundamental fallacy of right libertarianism, that the state is the only source of coercive power. Neither recognizes (surprise!) that the corporations that control most economic resources, and therefore most people's access to the necessities of life, have far more power than government to dictate our behavior and the day-to-day terms of our existence. (Murray's claim that "If your personal life were as closely monitored and regulated as the vocational life of millions of Americans, you would rightly consider it oppression" is unassailable, except that he means government health and safety rules, not employers' decrees about when you can go to the bathroom.) Evidently they haven't noticed that a handful of global conglomerates exercises a controlling influence on investment priorities, wages, interest rates, and conditions for workers and smaller businesses around the world; or that these same corporate dogs routinely wag the state tail, financing politicians who do their bidding on economic and foreign policy while threatening to withhold credit and move jobs from any community (or country) deemed insufficiently compliant.

Nor do Boaz and Murray acknowledge the ways corporate control of mass media and cultural production limits the circulation of dissenting ideas and encourages patterns of de facto censorship like chain stores' refusal to stock unedited CDs. (On the contrary, Boaz has the nerve to complain about "court intellectuals" of the left whose big-government ideology is suborned by their patrons, such powerful dispensers of Leviathan's largesse as . . . state universi-

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ties and the National Endowment for the Humanities! Now, who did you say funds the Cato Institute? Santa Claus, right?) In fact, in three hundred pages Boaz never mentions corporate power even to debunk the idea, while Murray declares bluntly that economic coercion does not exist, except, perhaps, in rare cases of "natural monopoly." The world as depicted in these books is the projection of an imagination stuck somewhere in the eighteenth century, its inhabitants myriad individual producers, entrepreneurs, and workers all playing by the same rules, freely competing and contracting in the marketplace. As Boaz puts it, "If I trade my labor for a paycheck from Microsoft, it's because I value the money more than the time, and the shareholders of Microsoft value my labor more than the money they give up." And if we can't agree on how much of the shareholders' money my time and labor are worth? Well, gee, surely I have as much choice of more obliging employers as Microsoft has of less demanding workers.

The authors' discussion of property is equally simplistic. In both books, the freedom to use land and other resources for productive purposes, and the need for nonviolent means of deciding who gets to use what, are conflated with ownership, defined by Boaz as the right to "use, control, or dispose of an object or entity." But use is one thing, control and disposition another, and the elision of this distinction has no basis other than dogma. Not only have some societies managed quite well without individual ownership of land—various Native American tribes come to mind—but given that the earth and its resources were here before any of us, making the notion of literal ownership absurd, there is no defensible reason why those who first acquired property (usually through one or another form of conquest, not, as Boaz seems to think, by homesteading) should control its use by future generations.

Nor is having the personal use of resources the same as controlling and disposing of them for a profit. Boaz worries about someone coming along and confiscating "the wealth we've created"; but the more wealth property owners create, the less likely they are to have done it by themselves. Should they retain absolute control over resources that others—the propertyless with only their labor to sell—have helped produce? What happens to the latter's freedom under such a regime? Ignoring such obvious questions, the authors in effect reduce the issue of property to whether someone can (Murray's example) "come in off the street and walk off with your television."

Like Murray, Boaz upholds the right of property owners to discriminate against anyone whose values, appearance, or behavior they don't like; the impact on the freedom of those forced to conform to get a job or apartment—let alone those with the wrong skin color or other immutable traits—is not considered. Just as all economic dealings in Laissez-faireworld are purely voluntary transactions among equals, the moral and cultural judgments that inform those dealings are assumed to reflect millions of individual tastes and prejudices rather than ubiquitous social patterns like racism, homophobia, antidrug hysteria, and the like. Your employer says, Take a drug test or be fired? Find one who likes potheads. Turned down by a landlord who won't rent to blacks? No problem—the one down the block won't rent to white people.

There would seem to be a contradiction between this picture of happy pluralism and Murray's promotion of discrimination as a weapon against vice. But then, it seems that in every respect the freewheeling economic and cultural marketplace turns out to be a repository of stern, small-town bourgeois virtues. Indeed, both authors regard as a major selling point the claim that liberating our society from the heavy hand of the state would restore it to moral health: the undeserving poor would no longer have a claim on the earnings of the productive and diligent; the demise of Social Security and Medicare would revive thrift, prudence, and filial obligation to aging parents; without the cushion of welfare, unmarried childbearing would once again be socially stigmatized and economically punishing.

For Murray, of course, restoring what he forthrightly refers to as "social control" is the whole point of the antistatist agenda. Boaz, on the other hand, does note that some might consider this objective at odds with the libertarian

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aim of emancipating the individual. But he quickly disposes of this cavil. Libertarianism, he explains, aims to free the individual "from artificial, coercive restraints on his actions," not "from the reality of the world." Taxes, in other words, are artificial and coercive, but the constraints of Victorian morality are natural limits, like death.

From this perspective it's irrelevant that, say, collectivizing support of the "unproductive" old, while coercive in one respect, is liberating in others—allowing old people to live independently rather than with bossy or resentful children; enabling young people to take up acting or travel down the Amazon rather than thriftily, prudently going straight from school to planning for their retirement. The issue as Boaz presents it is not one set of social arrangements versus another, each with its own tradeoff of freedom and restriction, but arrangements that uphold versus those that violate the natural order. It follows that except for physical violence, all nongovernmental restrictions on freedom—not only control of behavior through material reward and punishment but such age-old methods of social discipline as ostracism, humiliation, and psychological intimidation—are simply "reality" and off-limits to discussion.

Nonetheless, contradictions keep intruding on Boaz's polemic like the return of the repressed, especially when he tries to square liberty with family values. He supports equal legal rights for women and gays, opposes state policing of sexuality, and not only thinks the government has no business prohibiting gay marriage but argues—this is the high point of the book, as far as I'm concerned—that government should get out of the marriage business altogether, allowing marriage to become a voluntary contract like any other. Yet he naively sees the family as a "natural" association rather than a social institution—one that serves valuable purposes, to be sure, but is also chiefly responsible for enforcing male supremacy and sexual conformity (and for enlisting the state in these endeavors).

Boaz complains of unmarried welfare mothers' "long-term dependency" on government, as if it were unquestionably preferable that mothers be forced into long-term dependency on husbands. He seems unaware (perhaps he's too young to remember) that the stigma against unwed childbearing reinforced women's economic dependence, perpetuated a sexual double standard, and trapped countless people in miserable marriages; or that feminism, not welfare, is mainly responsible for its decline. He agrees that "Women should have the right to work," yet laments that government benefits have "usurped responsibility for infants, children, and the elderly" formerly assumed by "the family—for which read "housewives." (In any case it will be news to most parents that government-provided day care is taking over child rearing.)

But never mind. If these purported libertarians are a waste of time for anyone trying to understand economic or social domination, surely they offer some insight into their chief target, the state? Strike three! Again, their basic axiom, that the state is a foreign body intruding on a free and independent marketplace, is firmly rooted in fantasy. In reality, the modern state came into being to serve the needs of the market: it backs that most elementary requirement for the free flow of capital, a reliable currency; builds the roads essential to moving goods; maintains the military and diplomatic umbrella that protects overseas investment and trade; and if necessary goes to war in behalf of these interests. And since the risk and instability built into capitalism—its "creative destruction"—is ultimately intolerable to the capitalists themselves, it is chiefly big business that has pressed the state to regulate markets, limit competition, and subsidize its costs with public funds. Even in this heady age of devolution, I have yet to hear the *Wall Street Journal* propose abolishing the Federal Reserve Board, with its dubious power to curb "inflation" (that is, higher wages).

Until recently, the "big government" the free marketeers want to dismantle had the active support of the American corporate elite. In the post-World War II era, business, government, and the labor movement forged a historic compromise for the avowed purpose of saving a capitalist system shaken by the crisis of the Great Depression, the power of the Soviet Union, and

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the threat of domestic and foreign radicalism. The deal was that economic regulation and cooperation between business and labor would ensure high wages and employee benefits, securing the loyalty—and the buying power—of a prosperous middle class; government social welfare programs would provide a safety net for the old and poor; and the state, aggressively pursuing the cold war, would pour billions of federal military dollars into the private economy. In addition, business would profit by adapting to civilian use technologies originally developed for the military, like jet planes, plastics, and computers. Ignoring all this, Murray argues, as evidence that government programs make no difference, that "the trendline shows a regular drop in poverty from World War II through the 1960s . . . the steepest drop in poverty occurred during the 1950s"—not during Johnson's War on Poverty. Whatever the accuracy of this controversial statistic, the fact is that the entire postwar period, the most prosperous in our history, was also the high point of state "interference" in the market.

But now business wants out of the deal, or anyway those parts of it that maintained Americans' standard of living. High wages and high taxes are obstacles to competition in the world market, while the demise of the Soviet regime and the paralysis of the left have removed any need to show that "capitalism delivers the goods." Yet already there's an incipient global infrastructure of regulation, in the form of institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, treaties like GATT and NAFTA, and the European Economic Community. And the pressure for more controls is likely to grow in the face of instability—indeed, near anarchy—in the former Soviet Union, as well as the spread of militant nationalism, fundamentalism, and other varieties of resistance to the new economic order.

At present, however, the power of transnational corporations has merely made it impossible for supposedly democratic governments to do anything. No matter who gets elected, politicians face the same demand: deregulate, reduce taxes, and enforce austerity on pain of disinvestment and a bad credit rating. The result is a flattening out of debate and a trivialization of politics that have fed the widespread, disgusted perception that all government does is throw our money down the drain. Meanwhile, for at least two decades moral conservatives of both the right and the left have carried on a relentless campaign against every form of "freedom of personal behavior," from abortion and divorce to marijuana smoking to the production and consumption of sexually dissident art and "unwholesome" popular culture to teenage sex and flirting in the office. In this cramped, guilt-ridden social atmosphere right libertarianism has flourished, tapping people's frustration with politics and encouraging them to direct their thwarted impulses toward freedom into the narrow channels of freedom from taxes, freedom from "political correctness," freedom to resent the poor, freedom to discriminate, freedom to dream of sharing in the bounty of capitalist expansion.

There's a scary contrast between the emotional appeal of the libertarian right and the poverty of its thought. In part, the thinness of Boaz's and Murray's arguments can be attributed to what might be called vulgar anti-Marxism. The shared premise of their books—explicit in Boaz's dismissal of Marx as a proponent of "crabbed, reactionary statism" and his assurance that state meddling in the "natural harmony" of the free market is the sole cause of group conflict; implicit in both books' failure to note, let alone debate, the most basic socialist objections to liberal ideology—is that the collapse of communism means Marx's monumental critique of capitalism can be safely ignored. Although this is no doubt a sound political judgment, it's an intellectual disaster. Among other things, making class antagonism the great unmentionable precludes any insight into why, if classical liberalism is so terrific, it was supplanted in the first place. Boaz does make a brief stab at this question, concluding that the main culprit was historical amnesia: people took for granted the "unprecedented improvement in living standards" the Industrial Revolution had wrought and didn't realize how much better off they were than past generations. "Charles Dickens," he complains in one of his sillier moments, "be-

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moaned the already waning practice of child labor that kept alive many children who in earlier eras would have died."

Equally disabling is the authors' resolutely pre-Freudian mentality. Boaz is an Aristotelian rationalist, while Murray leavens his faith in reason with loyalty to "tradition and the nonrational aspects of the human spirit." But both see human motivation as entirely conscious, deliberate, and self-interested, or as Murray puts it, "absent physical coercion, everyone's mind is under his own control." Here too they are in sync with contemporary political fashion, which is as contemptuous of psychoanalysis as of Marxism. Yet with no recognition of unconscious conflict between desire and fear, the origins of that conflict in the unequal struggle of the pleasure-seeking infant with parental authority, and conscience as its uneasy resolution, it's impossible to see morality for what it is—a structure of internalized coercion. This is not to say that all moral imperatives are oppressive, any more than all laws are; only that morals are no less socially imposed than laws, and should be no less subject to examination and criticism. Because Boaz and Murray do not understand this, they have no use for—indeed no conception of—questions I consider essential to the project of human freedom: Do "family values" produce socially submissive, sexually frustrated people whose unconscious rage, mixed with guilt, surfaces as aggressive moralism? Do we glorify constant work and look with suspicion on idleness because we need to, even in a world where technology is increasingly severing the link between productivity and human labor? Or are we punishing ourselves for guilty desires—and are we therefore less likely to question the conditions of our work, and whose purposes it serves?

The authors are of course equally unreflective about the psychosocial implications of their own worldview. They both argue, for instance, that the basis of our natural right to freedom is "self-ownership." This is a curiously alienated idea: I don't "own" my self, as if it were an object somehow separable from my subjectivity; I *am* myself. But it makes sense as a reaction to the experience of having your body and psyche controlled by others. If you can't overcome the split between your deepest desires and the socialized self your upbringing has forced you to adopt, you can at least assert your control over "it"—at the same time denying your earliest and most profound loss of autonomy by fixating on the state as your only antagonist. (Is it entirely fortuitous that right libertarians are so fond of parental metaphors for government? Boaz: "Conservatives want to be your daddy, telling you what to do and what not to do. Liberals want to be your mommy, feeding you, tucking you in, and wiping your nose.") The right to property, in turn, becomes a means of extending control to your surroundings; but since control is only a substitute for genuine satisfaction, you can never have enough.

Boaz unwittingly touches on this truth when he argues that we need property because scarcity is inherent in the human condition: our unlimited wants will always outstrip our finite resources. It doesn't occur to him that forbidden, unspeakable wishes for real emotional and erotic freedom may stubbornly press for expression in the socially acceptable guise of "insatiable" material desires. This dynamic suggests why Boaz and Murray can see no serious distinction between limiting corporate control of land or capital and borrowing someone's toothbrush without permission. In the right-libertarian unconscious, the very definition of freedom becomes control, expansion, and domination—in other words, the will to power.

The story of the right's success has everything to do with the resonance of this definition for large numbers of Americans, up and down the class ladder. But idealists like Boaz (I'm not sure I can say the same for Murray) are unlikely to be pleased with the results. Under conditions of worsening economic inequality, the yearning for freedom-as-power is easily appropriated by right-wing populists and ultimately by fascists. Libertarian conservatives may abhor the Pat Buchanans and the paramilitary thugs; all the same, the right-libertarian mindset has helped create them.

On the other hand, leftists have been unable to combat the right's conception of freedom, or offer an alternative, because for the most part they, too, unconsciously identify freedom with

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power. Unlike the right libertarians, however, they fear the destructive potential of the will to power and so conclude that individual freedom is inherently dangerous. Instead of rejecting the state "parent," they aspire to take over the role and suppress "selfishness" in the interest of "social justice." Where right libertarians see their moral agenda as natural and therefore compatible with freedom, leftists openly use guilt as a political weapon. Freedom becomes a positive value only when redefined to mean collective empowerment for subordinate classes and social groups.

Ironically, in seeking to curb the individual will to power in favor of equality, leftists invest their own subterranean desires for freedom-as-power in the activist state. In my view, the revival of the left depends on relinquishing this investment. We need to recognize that despite appearances the state is not our friend, that in the long run its erosion is an opportunity and a challenge, not a disaster. I don't want to be misunderstood: I'm not suggesting that we stop supporting Social Security or national health insurance or public schools or antidiscrimination laws. If my immediate choices are the barbarism of unleashed capital or a state-funded public sector, the tyranny of uninhibited private bigotry or state-enforced civil rights, I choose the state. Or rather, I choose the social goods and civil liberties that are available under state auspices.

The distinction is important, because the idea that the state *gives* us these benefits is a mystification. Basically, Murray is right: government does not cause social improvement. In actual historical fact, every economic and social right that we've achieved since the nineteenth century has been hard-won by organized, militant, and often radical social movements: the labor movement; the socialist, communist, and anarchist movements; the New Left student movement; the black and feminist and gay liberation movements; the ecology movement. (Such movements are yet another social force that Boaz and Murray see no need to include in their analysis of the individual versus the state—in part, I imagine, because the left itself so often forgets their importance.) The role of the state from the New Deal and the postwar compact till the start of its present no-more-Mr.-Nice-Guy phase was to manage potentially destabilizing social conflict by offering carefully limited concessions to the troublemakers.

Since the liberal state's priority is stability, not equality (let alone emancipation), those concessions generally took shape as hierarchical, bureaucratic agencies designed more to control their clients than to serve them. Nonetheless, their existence succeeded in defusing the social movements, not only because they represented real if partial victories, but because the government was able to take the credit and convince the public—including most movement activists—that nothing more was possible. From labor laws that restrict the right to strike and define who can and can't be organized to Nixon's strategy of affirmative action, which ignored systemic racial inequality to focus on upward mobility for the black middle class, state social policy has never wavered in its primary allegiance to the corporate elite. The government's current rush to abandon any pretense of social responsibility ought to make this painfully clear: what the state supposedly giveth it promptly taketh away as soon as the balance of social power shifts. In this case, of course, social power is shifting away from the national state itself; liberals and social democrats are still trying to board a train that's already left the station.

In parallel fashion, the statism of the cultural left does not further equality so much as it reinforces law and order. Originally, the relation of the black, feminist, and gay movements to the state was adversarial: they demanded an end to state-sponsored discrimination, from Jim Crow and the body of family law codifying women's inferior status to the refusal of the criminal justice system to take lynching, rape, and wife-beating seriously to the criminalization of abortion and homosexual sex. Although such battles are still going on—for gays, especially, they are a major arena—the emphasis has long since shifted to demanding that the state use its power to prohibit racist and sexist practices in the "private" realm. Insofar as the demand is to outlaw overt, provable discriminatory acts by employers, landlords, store-owners and so on, it simply aims for public recognition that (pace

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Boaz and Murray) discrimination is a coercive act as unacceptable as violence or theft. But the problem, from the social movements' point of view, is that overt, deliberate discrimination is only the crudest expression of a deeply rooted culture of inequality. For many opponents of that culture, it has seemed a logical next step to invoke state power against patterns of behavior that reinforce white male dominance and exclude, marginalize, or intimidate vulnerable groups.

Actually, it's a plunge into dangerous illusion. The ingrained behavior and attitudes that support the dominant culture are by definition widespread, reflexive, and experienced as normal and reasonable by the people who uphold them. They are also often unconscious or ambiguous. A serious effort to crush racism and sexism with the blunt instrument of law would be a project of totalitarian dimensions—and still it would fail. Transforming a culture and its consciousness requires a different kind of politics, a movement of people who consistently and publicly confront oppressive social patterns, explain what's wrong with them, and refuse to live by them—to stay in the closet, make dinner, smile, ignore the patronizing remark or the nervous surveillance. In fact, the turn toward the state is a symptom of the social movements' current weakness. It's the disappearance from public conversation of any ongoing critique of "normal," everyday sexism that makes women think the only way to fight male pressure to have sex they don't want is to prosecute it as rape. It's the general repressiveness of the social climate that encourages moves to ban offensive speech or define any form of sexual expression in the workplace as sexual harassment. The main effect of these maneuvers is to foment confusion, cynicism, and sexual witch hunts, trivialize sexual violence, and legitimize conservative demands for censorship—while at the same time ceding the moral high ground of free expression to the right.

It's time to become a movement again. That means, first of all, depending on no one's power but our own. It means formulating a vision of what kind of society we want and agitating for that vision, in every inventive way we can, wherever we find ourselves. It means challenging, at every opportunity and in every venue of our daily lives, the institutions, policies, practices, conventions, attitudes that oppose and repress our vision. It means creating alternative institutions and experimenting with new ways of living to figure out how our vision might work.

My own vision of what I want—of why I want a movement—has at its center the conviction that freedom and equality are symbiotic, not opposed. Although it's unlikely that social coercion—governmental or otherwise—will ever be entirely surpassed, my measure of a good society is the extent to which it functions by voluntary cooperation among people with equal social and political power. For all their wrongheadedness, the right libertarians have grasped a couple of basic truths. One is that there is no such thing as a free society without free individuals. The other is that the interaction of free individuals produces what they call "spontaneous order" and what I would call self-government or simply democracy. What they don't understand is how much has to change to let free individuals and spontaneous order flourish. That's where we come in. □

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Jeff Faux

HEDGING THE NEOLIBERAL BET

HAS GLOBALIZATION GONE TOO FAR? by Dani Rodrik. Washington D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 1997. 128 pp. $20.95.

Mainstream economists are getting a little nervous. The market for their ideas is booming, of course. The neoliberal enterprise—deregulation, privatization, and the ripping up of the social safety net—expands relentlessly around the globe. The politician and the bureaucrat are despised, the trade unionist is mocked as irrelevant, and the investor everywhere is king. What thermonuclear strategists were to the cold war, free-market economists are to the new global marketplace. But there are signs that the world is having some second thoughts about the neoliberal model. And who more than economists understands that when a bull market looks like it may be topping out, it is time to hedge your bets?

Dani Rodrik has written a hedge for the profession. But *Has Globalization Gone Too Far?* is more important than that. A few hours invested in this small book reaps returns on two levels. One is Rodrik's accessible and often brilliant analysis of the way international markets can destabilize national societies. The second is his unintentional illustration of the weakness of the foundation upon which the neoliberal argument rests.

Rodrik himself is no contrarian. A professor of international economics at Harvard's Kennedy School and fellow of several establishment institutes, he is a firm believer in free trade and in the wisdom of moving toward one global marketplace. But he wants his fellow economists to recognize that economic globalization is causing some pain out there, which, if not attended to, could cause the neoliberal project to stall. The fact that his book was published by the Institute for International Economics, a bastion of free-trade orthodoxy, is a signal of creeping anxiety in the upper reaches of the economists' club.

The book opens with references to the 1995 strikes in France, Pat Buchanan's campaign in the 1996 Republican primary, and the political resurrection of communist politicians in response to the shock of buccaneer capitalism in Eastern Europe. Rodrik thinks these events show that the private marketplace is not distributing benefits evenly enough to keep the social peace—and to prevent the rise of protectionism. The fear of protectionism drives the author and pervades the book.

Rodrik analyzes three sources of potential "tension" between global trade and social stability. The first is the impact of foreign trade on domestic inequality. Over the last decade, a small band of economists, such as Barry Bluestone of the University of Massachusetts, Richard Freeman of Harvard, and Lawrence Mishel of the Economic Policy Institute, have built a strong statistical case linking increased immigration and low-wage imports with the growing wage gap between the top one-quarter and the bottom three-quarters of the labor force.

At first, the dominant neoclassical wing of the profession denied that any such link existed. When the evidence became undeniable, they dismissed its effect as small: they said that it explains no more than 15 percent to 30 percent of the rise in inequality. The real culprit, they claim, is technological progress and the demand for new skills that it generates. Inasmuch as we all want technological progress, the mainstream consensus concludes that rising inequality is inevitable. But because the gains from increased trade are assumed to be so large, the cost is assumed to be worth it.

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Rodrik thinks the dissidents have the better side of the argument. He points out that factors like technological change are also products of globalization. Rodrik notes: "When Rupert Murdoch goes on a global buying spree and replaces workers with machines at all the newspapers he acquires, it is not at all clear that the resulting labor-market pressures should be attributed to technological change rather than globalization." He concedes another of the dissenters' points: that economic models can identify only a small fraction of the totality of forces that have led to rising inequality. Of *identified* causes of wage inequality, imports and immigration make up a sizeable share.

Rodrik argues that trade in general, not just low-wage imports, worsens income distribution. Increased international competition, he writes, translates into greater "elasticity" of the domestic demand for labor. In lay terms, this means that a worker is now competing with a much larger labor supply. As a result, a small shift in foreign workers' wages or in the global demand for a product or service can cause big shifts in the domestic demand for workers. Labor's greater vulnerability to market fluctuations undercuts its bargaining position vis-à-vis capital. Therefore, concludes Rodrik, "The first-order effect of trade appears to have been a redistribution of the enterprise surplus toward employers rather than the enlargement of that surplus." The evidence, therefore, tells us that the critics of free trade have been right; trade is not enlarging wealth, but redistributing it upward.

The second area of tension between expanding trade and social stability is the way in which trade undermines national institutions aimed at protecting people from the harshness of the market. Here Rodrik notes the inconsistency of economists who support a ban on child labor for goods produced in the United States, but oppose any attempt to ban goods from abroad made with child labor. He concludes that economists should back off from the idea that unfettered trade should take priority over a nation's right to support its values.

The third source of tension is the undermining of government by international trade pressures. Rodrik shows that globalization pressures are downsizing the domestic public sector and shifting the tax burden from capital to labor. He concludes that support for government is weakening at the very time when it is needed to provide a buffer—largely in the form of social insurance—to protect people against the relentless pressures of dislocation. Despite the perception of a backlash against the welfare state, says Rodrik, the principles behind it remain popular. The erosion of the protections it affords therefore threatens the social legitimacy of free trade.

Unfortunately, Rodrik's policy recommendations do not match his analysis. Like Bill Clinton, he feels the workers' pain and thinks government should do more to assuage it, but he cannot bring himself to challenge accepted political wisdom. Thus, he advocates the standard policy package of shifting domestic spending from old-age insurance to training and unemployment compensation "without increasing the overall tax burden." But this does not get at the core distributional problem of the shift of income and wealth from labor to capital. It simply calls for workers to take less of a hit early in life and pay for it in their old age.

Rodrik's politics are at best naive. He lectures labor and government to be more responsible, but has nothing to say to multinational corporate business. The day I wrote this review, the Senate Finance Committee voted to cut Medicare benefits and raise the age of eligibility from sixty-five to sixty-seven, largely because of pressures from the financial industry to slash entitlements. Rodrik writes, "Labor should advocate a global economy that carries a more humane face," but he is silent about the fiercely organized efforts of multinational business and finance to prevent humane policies from even being considered by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and other rule setters for the global marketplace. This suggests a point of view that is, to put it mildly, out of touch with the realities of the global political economy.

Still, if his economic analysis were all one got from Rodrik's book, it would be worth reading. Yet there is one more bonus. Rodrik's intellectual honesty leads him to write a brief pas-

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sage that exposes the cracked foundation upon which the entire neoliberal trade argument is built. In discussing the arguments over the effect of trade on wage inequality, he tells us: "Economics is notoriously bad at quantifying forces that most people believe are quite important. For example, no widely accepted model attributes to postwar trade liberalization more than a very tiny fraction of the increased prosperity of the advanced industrial countries. Yet most economists do believe that expanding trade was very important to this progress."

Rodrik's stunning observation is correct. Search the serious literature of economics for empirical evidence that trade among industrial nations brings appreciable gains, and one cannot find it. Even when under pressure to defend free trade, economists cannot deliver a substantial number. At the time of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) debate, for example, NAFTA supporters' estimates of the increase in growth it would produce came to less than the statistical margin of error in calculating the Gross Domestic Product. For all intents and purposes, it was zero.

We are dealing here with faith. Economists "believe." The confident assertion of the benefits of free trade is not based on empirical observation. It is based on the theory of comparative advantage—the theory that if all nations specialize in what they do best and trade freely with each other, their incomes will be maximized—that lies at the core of Economics 101. Rodrik, who in all else insists on evidence, bases his entire book on the unproven assumption that the benefits of free trade are so enormous that they dwarf the costs. Economists are said to live by hard numbers. But Rodrik's own frank admission that the calculation of costs of free trade are quantifiable while the benefits are merely assumed does not shake his confidence. Rodrik is a sophisticated believer, so he can permit himself to wonder if the religion of globalization might have gone "too far." But he is a believer nonetheless.

There is obviously much sense to the idea that specialization plus trade leads to more efficiency, everything else being equal. But everything else is not usually equal, and so the benefits of trade are often not equal to the costs. The point is not important when economists work their theoretical models. But it becomes critical when they get up from their computers and give the nation advice.

In this case, an economic assumption has been mistaken for an immutable law: expanded trade, whatever the cost, is always justified. But the costs keep rising and the benefits never seem to trickle down below the top of the pyramid of income and wealth. After twenty years of the pain of opening up to global markets, the typical American worker still does not see the gain. It's not surprising that the more perceptive of our economists are getting worried. For those who want to know what they might be worried about, Rodrik's book is a good place to start. But read it carefully. □

Philip Kasinitz

STILL BELIEVING IN THE DREAM

STILL THE PROMISED CITY?: AFRICAN-AMERICANS AND NEW IMMIGRANTS IN POSTINDUSTRIAL NEW YORK, by Roger Waldinger. Harvard University Press: 1996. 374 pp. $35.00.

Last January a report by New York's Department of City Planning verified what most New Yorkers already knew: immigrants from an extraordinary variety of nations continue to pour into the city in numbers not seen since early in the century. Marking the occasion with a ceremony on Ellis Island, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani made it clear that he considers this to be very good news, something it is hard to imagine a Republican mayor doing in any other city. That day a reporter from one of the television net-

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works called me with some now familiar questions: how can New York, whose economy is far from booming, continue to absorb so many newcomers? Are there really jobs for all of them? And if new immigrants, many unskilled, can manage to find work in postindustrial New York, why is it that so many native blacks and Puerto Ricans cannot?

I told the reporter what I tell everyone who wants to understand New York: read Roger Waldinger's new book. *Still the Promised City?* is a first-rate overview of the recent ethnic and economic history of the city. But it is also much more. Using an imaginative combination of quantitative data, interviews, and case studies, Waldinger grapples with a question many of us prefer to avoid: what does massive immigration at a time of declining real wages mean for American workers, particularly for black workers?

Most analysts of urban labor markets look at broad trends. Some point to de-industrialization, which left unskilled black workers "mismatched" to new job opportunities in the white-collar economy. Yet this model does not really fit New York. Blacks were never a major part of New York's industrial labor force, and despite the decline in manufacturing, hundreds of thousands of new immigrants *have* managed to find low-skilled jobs in the city. Others point to workforce polarization and the emergence of an "hourglass economy." The elite white-collar "masters of the universe" continue to be concentrated in "global cities" like New York, along with the underpaid new immigrants who serve their increasingly specialized needs. Yet this analysis applies to only a small part of the labor force (the public sector, for example, is nonexistent in this model) and never really explains what happened to native minority workers. Finally, those who argue that immigrants simply displaced African-Americans cannot really explain why the African-American exodus from many low-skilled jobs began *before* most immigrants arrived.

In contrast to these broad-brush approaches Waldinger examines the nitty-gritty process of *who* actually gets *what* jobs. In so doing he reminds us that workers and employers are not just labor and capital. They are people; people with histories and prejudices; people who are part of families, ethnic groups, and social networks. Employers, he argues, have preferences about whom they wish to hire based on perceptions of different ethnic groups' skills and work habits, "positive discrimination" in favor of certain groups, and outright racism against others. Yet this ethnic hiring "queue" is also shaped by the availability of workers in a group and the shifting number of jobs. Thus new opportunities opened up for immigrants in garment manufacturing in the 1970s despite a declining number of jobs in the industry, because the number of Jewish and Italian workers was declining even faster.

This model is complicated by the creation of formal and informal areas of specialization that become, in effect, "ethnic niches." Of course we all know that members of certain ethnic groups cluster in certain occupations. Yet this fact rarely figures in economists' models of the labor force. Looking at how workers negotiate their position as members of groups adds a much needed dose of reality. In addition, Waldinger takes us beyond the increasingly misleading categories of "black," "white," and "Hispanic." West Indian immigrants, now about one-third of New York's black labor force, have different employment patterns than native blacks; different Latino groups occupy different places in the economy; and ethnic divisions among native whites persist four generations past Ellis Island.

Ethnic "niches" come about in a variety of ways: immigrants arrive with certain skills, abilities, or disabilities. West Indians came with a tradition of female labor force participation and fluency in the English language, a good match with the needs of the growing health care sector in the 1970s and 1980s. Koreans generally arrived with some capital and high rates of education but little English. Small retailing thus made sense. But more important than the initial reasons for going into a specific job is the question of how a group comes to dominate an occupation by passing on vital information, formal and informal assistance, and apprenticeships, references, and capital through kin and ethnic networks. Of course such networks, intentionally or not, make it harder for nongroup members to get "niche" jobs.

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Are ethnic niches good for the workers within them? The picture Waldinger presents is mixed. Contrary to the assumption that "assimilation" is the road to upward mobility, staying in the occupational "ghetto" can be an advantage. For some long-established groups, notably Jews and African-Americans, wages in "ethnic" occupations are now higher than those of group members outside the niches. For both of these groups the value of staying within the ethnic niche has increased over time.

For recent arrivals the picture is less rosy. Chinese immigrant workers, for example, can expect substantially lower wages in heavily Chinese industries than their compatriots in the mainstream economy. Still, Waldinger (in what is perhaps an uncharacteristically Pollyanna-ish moment) insists that niche employment has hidden advantages. The ethnic economy provides jobs and mobility opportunities for many—women with small children, non-English speakers—who do not have access to the mainstream economy. By pooling wages among networks of kin and sharing household responsibilities, Chinese workers can sometimes achieve reasonably comfortable household incomes despite very low individual incomes.

This is, of course, the classic "immigrant" strategy. It relies on dense kin networks, on the immigrant's memory of how much worse things were in the "old country," and perhaps on the immigrant's faith that tomorrow will be brighter. Ironically, assimilation actually poses a danger to this strategy. Coming to share U.S. values about individualism, consumption, and personal freedom tends to undermine it. Earlier immigrants overcame this problem either by joining the mainstream labor force or by shifting into more lucrative niches—a kind of group upward mobility. Thus New York's Jews moved from garment manufacturing and small retailing into big retailing and the civil service (often taking jobs below their skill levels: New York in the 1930s was blessed with many high school teachers with doctorates riding out the depression in a job with a pension) and then into the elite professions. Will a "postindustrial" economy provide today's immigrants with similar opportunities? Obviously it is too early to say, but Waldinger is, by and large, optimistic.

Viewed in this way, the question "Why can't African-Americans simply do what the Chinese do?" can be seen for the pernicious nonsense that it is. African-Americans are *not* immigrants. Long-time New Yorkers, they can scarcely be expected to bring immigrant attitudes and expectations to the job market. Nor, at this late date, do they benefit much from the immigrant-like family and social networks that may have helped first-generation migrants from the South gain a foothold in the economy a half-century ago. Although African-Americans have been among the most niche-concentrated of New Yorkers, Waldinger demonstrates that in many industries they have encountered unified white resistance far more intense than anything faced by newly arrived immigrants. As new groups gain closure over economic niches, African-Americans, at the very end of the hiring "queue," have been consistently frozen out. Thus by the 1960s the African-American share of many service sector and manufacturing jobs fell as blacks (and Puerto Ricans) began to be replaced by new immigrants.

Where did the native blacks go? Far from being driven out, Waldinger shows, many moved enthusiastically into the public sector. The growth of the black middle class was largely due to newly available niches in government employment, niches opened up by the expansion of social services, an exodus of white ethnics, and post-civil-rights-era black political mobilization. Given the continuing reality of racism in the private sector, government jobs were attractive. They were more secure than jobs in the volatile service sector, and growing black political clout could be called upon to dampen the effects of racial discrimination. And in the public sector, English-language ability, citizenship, and political connections gave native blacks advantages over immigrants.

Yet the results of this shift were uneven. Black incomes improved dramatically in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, in Archie Bunker's Queens, black household incomes surpass those of whites. But government work has drawbacks from the point of view of group upward mobility. Even if a black public-sector supervisor wants to aid her co-ethnics, she is constrained

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by educational requirements and civil service regulations. "The virtues of government work," Waldinger notes, "are also its vices: they are good jobs that attract competitive applicants, which leaves less-qualified black New Yorkers out in the cold."

Unlike most researchers who study the ethnic economy, Waldinger devotes considerable attention to the politics of municipal employment. In so doing he uncovers the economic interests that lie beneath much of New York's ethnic strife. The struggles between blacks and Jews in education, efforts to open or close public hospitals, and controversies over affirmative action in the uniform services are all, at least in part, about jobs. Waldinger also points to a crucial and largely ignored source of intrablack tension. During the 1980s, as New York's increasingly African-American civil service expanded, public assistance payments and other expenditures for the poor declined. "Public sector concentration," Waldinger notes, "pits the interests of the city's black middle class against the interests of the black poor."

Finally, if the public sector was a good place to be during the 1980s, Waldinger argues (and I agree) that the future of the African-American niche looks less bright. African-Americans have inherited a welfare state in decline and an anti-government political climate probably exacerbated by the fact that much government employment is seen as a "black" niche. (This may help to explain the glee with which the Giuliani and Pataki administrations have attacked public expenditures.) And while government employment has shielded native blacks from immigrant competition up until now, it won't do so forever. Immigrants—particularly black immigrants—have already begun to demand their share of a shrinking municipal pie.

As with any work this wide-ranging, one can take issue with aspects of Waldinger's approach: although his case studies of niche creation are nuanced and subtle, some will find the definition of niche employment in the book's statistical chapters overly broad. He pays little attention to the role of gender in the labor process, and while he notes that family ties affect the ethnic economy, he says little about how the entry of immigrant women into the labor force transforms those families. Perhaps most important, Waldinger, like many of the current welfare "reformers," has focused on access to employment rather than the elimination of poverty. This despite the fact that many of the "lousy jobs" (as he candidly describes them) now held by immigrants pay below poverty level wages. Yet these are quibbles of the sort a provocative book always raises.

So, is New York still the Promised City? For most immigrants Waldinger's answer is a tentative "so far, so good." Most are making a place for themselves in the economy and the polity. While some groups are clearly doing better than others (low labor force participation among Dominicans, the city's largest immigrant group, is a particular cause for concern), on the whole

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immigration has made for a more vibrant and more prosperous New York, with (at least thus far) little direct displacement of native African-Americans or Puerto Ricans. Yet for these native minority groups, Waldinger worries that the future may be less bright than the recent past. Although during the 1980s new opportunities in the public sector more than compensated for the erosion of many traditional African-American niches, New York's promise may now be dimming for native blacks and Latinos, to say nothing of the prospects of the *children* of today's black and brown immigrants who are, in effect, *becoming* native blacks and Latinos.

As for the larger question: "Is immigration good or bad for American workers?" readers hoping for a simple "yes" or "no" may be disappointed. *Still the Promised City?* is not a book of easy answers but rather one that reminds us how complex the questions really are. One of Waldinger's most important lessons is that even in the era of the global economy, labor markets remain to a large degree local. The winners and losers sort themselves out on a playing field shaped by a local history, local demographics, and a local political culture. Thus what is true in New York or Washington may not be true in Los Angeles or Chicago. Sweeping generalizations about globalization or deindustrialization are no substitute for fine-grained, locally specific analysis.

Yet this is not to imply that Waldinger's book will be of interest solely to New Yorkers. Not only has he written a masterful study of one labor market, he has provided us with a useful and subtle way of thinking about ethnicity and labor market competition in an America still obsessed by race, yet rapidly moving beyond the binary categories of "black" and "white." As such, one hopes that *Still the Promised City?* will find a wide audience among policy makers and trade unionists as well as scholars. □

The editors of *Dissent* congratulate the Teamsters on their victory in the UPS strike.

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Stereotyping and Racism

Editors:

Jeffrey Wasserstrom ("Distortions in the China Debate," Summer 1997) accuses *National Review* of running a racist anti-Asian cover as part of a right-wing campaign against renewing China's Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade status in particular, and against the Yellow Peril in general.

Our cover was neither "racist" nor "anti-Asian." It was a caricature of three *white* politicians shown, very plausibly, as soliciting bribes from Asian sources. The story it illustrated was not Ross Terrill's obituary of Deng Xiaoping, but, as the cover itself made clear, Rich Lowry's guide to the Clinton fund-raising scandal. And as for the post-Mao China debate, *National Review* has been a strong supporter of renewing MFN and, more broadly, of drawing China into an international community whose rules and conventions would be incentives for better Chinese behavior in human rights, trade, and foreign policy. We ran several editorials to this effect, a cover story by Ambassador Owen Harries, and a cover illustration that caricatured three white conservatives tripping over their swords in a rush to adopt bellicose anti-China attitudes.

In short, Wasserstrom's article was one of the more egregious "distortions in the China debate" that his title promised.

JOHN O'SULLIVAN
Editor
National Review

Jeffrey Wasserstrom Replies:

Had John O'Sullivan not decided to write his letter, I might never have perused again the issue of *National Review* in question (March 24, 1997). And I would not have come across the short poem on page 8 entitled "Chinese Water Torture," attributed to one W. H. Von Dreele, which I have now added to my growing file of recent works that invoke phrases or use visuals disturbingly reminiscent of the days when Fu Manchu serials played in American movie theaters.

As grateful as I am to O'Sullivan, I find it hard to take seriously his argument that the controversial and much discussed magazine cover (I am not the only one who has publicly criticized it) is neither "racist" nor "anti-Asian," simply because the main people being mocked on it are *white* politicians. Does he mean that he would not consider "racist" an illustration accompanying a story about white politicians attempting to raise money in the black community that presented the fund-raisers involved as having very thick lips, sporting Afros, and eating watermelon? Wouldn't he think "anti-Semitic" a drawing involving Jewish contributors (or even Israeli business people) that presented non-Jewish politicians as having large noses and wearing yarmulkes? What makes the *National Review* cover objectionable is precisely the fact that, in an attempt to ridicule three non-Asian public figures, it drapes them in clothing and gives them physical attributes that are linked in the Western imagination with Asians and Asian-Americans.

O'Sullivan's other points are more sensible. It is true that, owing in part to limits of space, I did not separate as neatly as I probably should have two trends that should be differentiated: (1) the increasing prevalence in American popular media of images that (albeit in some cases no doubt inadvertently) breathe new life into the Yellow Peril tradition of demonization (through the use of phrases such as "Chinese Water Torture," for example) and (2) the increasing prevalence of calls for shifts toward "containment" strategies by people convinced that the current Beijing regime poses a grave threat to U.S. interests. These two trends reinforce one another in various ways. Still, it is possible for a magazine to take a stand for extension of China's status as a Most Favored Nation trading partner and against "containment" (as O'Sullivan's has) while simultaneously contributing to the first trend. Many individuals and publications have called for China's MFN status to be revoked and embraced "containment" ideas, and have not created or published caricatures or poems that play on racist or anti-Asian imagery.

Finally, I did not claim that the anti-MFN crusade was a "right-wing" one or state that the *National Review* cover I found so objectionable was created as an accompaniment to Ross Terrill's obituary for Deng. I pointed out that the China debate has created strange political bedfellows of late and that it often confounds traditional visions of a clear right-left split, as well as raises problems for those who assume that they will find opposing views on China expressed in magazines associated with divergent points on the political spectrum. It was in this context, in fact, that I mentioned Terrill's piece in *NR* and Orville Schell's in the *Nation*. One can find in both periodicals pieces by China specialists who belong to the same select group singled out for praise in *The Coming Conflict with China*, simply because they have said or done things that have earned them the wrath of Beijing. □

Reading the Numbers

Editors:

Ruy Teixeira ("Finding the Real Center," *Dissent*, Spring 1997) presents the differing claims of Stan Greenberg (Campaign for America's Future) and Mark Penn (Democratic Leadership Council) as to why Clinton's "centrist" position brought success in 1996. These analyses have implications as well for how Democrats can win congressional elections. Teixeira gives his own opinion of why Clinton was successful and why Democrats in Congress gained seats but fell short of retaking the House, and concludes that Democrats can increase electoral success by forging a different type of centrism that captures the best of both the Old and New Democrat traditions.

Beyond polling data presented in the article, we would like to present the results of research, based directly on elec-

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toral outcomes, that speaks to the issue and favors the Greenberg/CAF "Old Democrat" approach for success. The study, co-authored by Neil Wollman and Leonard Williams of Manchester College, correlated electoral outcomes with congressional incumbents' political ideology, based on ratings by the American Conservative Union, Americans for Democratic Action, and *National Journal*. They found that over the last two congressional elections, liberal Democratic incumbents won 95 percent of their races. In 1994, when voters turned out the Democrats, it was the moderates who were more likely to lose: 25 percent lost their elections, a very high rate for incumbents, compared with 8 percent of liberals--a rejection of the New Democrat philosophy rather than traditional liberalism. In marginal districts, where the previous election had been close, conventional wisdom says that candidates must move to the political center to win—yet here the 17-percentage point gap between moderates and liberals increased to a 27-point difference. In 1996, while too few Democrats lost to draw conclusions, as in 1994, liberals won a higher percentage of the vote than did moderates.

Although our results do not speak directly to the presidential election, we believe that the political mood of the country is better judged by hundreds of races than by one, albeit presidential, race.

Perhaps a combination of the Old and New Democrat approach that Teixeira speaks of would best win elections, but that is merely speculation at this point. What we know now is that the non-centrist Old Democrat approach has brought the most electoral success.

NEIL WOLLMAN
ABIGAIL A. FULLER
North Manchester, Ind. □

Center-Left British Journalism

Editors:

I am writing to take exception to Peter Mandler's article "A Popular Front of the Mind? 'Center-Left' Journalism in Britain Today" (Spring 1997). Since Mandler has something disobliging to say about every one of the journals he mentions, I suppose I should be glad that he commends *New Left Review* for continuing "to pump out its bimonthly ration of Marxist structuralism" and for emerging "fortified" from the editorial re-shuffle of a few years back. But his claim that *NLR* is to be associated with a sectarian politics remote from real life is demonstrably false.

A distinctive feature of the *NLR* since the sixties has been its critique of the undemocratic structures of the U.K. state. In 1988 several of *NLR*'s editors and contributors played a role in launching Charter 88, a citizens' movement aimed at achieving eight important democratic reforms including a Bill of Rights, replacement of first-past-the-post elections by proportional representation, and a Scottish Parliament. The movement subsequently attracted fifty thousand members, provoked much public discussion, and helped to change the Labour Party's position on a number of constitutional and libertarian questions with a commitment to a referendum on electoral reform. Of course the thinking of Perry Anderson, Tom Nairn, and Anthony Barnett was only one strand in the formation of this movement, but most would agree that it was an important one. As Neal Ascherson pointed out in the *Independent on Sunday* there was also a clear link between this work and Will Hutton's highly popular critique of the stranglehold over Britain's political economy exercised by a still oligarchic state made in his best-selling book *The State We're In*.

Mandler may not consider democratic reform a proper concern for his "popular front of the mind" and was no doubt thinking of the critiques of New Labour that *NLR* has published. However, it is far from being the case that only "Marxist structuralists" have problems with New Labour; one of the most pointed critiques we have published was, in fact, by Conrad Russell, who, as well as being a distinguished historian, is a Liberal Democrat spokesman in the House of Lords. Another was by Peter Wilby, who, as a recent editor of the *Independent on Sunday*, could claim some credentials as a "center-left" journalist and candidate for the "popular front of the mind."

In another unhappy phrase, Mandler chides British intellectual journals with not being "close to the masses." There are complex questions in the modern world that left intellectuals have a duty to address at whatever level is required to clarify them. I would myself say that the work on pensions published in *NLR* and *Soundings* begins to lay the basis for a new political economy and that it could eventually turn out to be as useful to popular campaigning as the "Nairn-Anderson" theses on the British state. And our consistently "pro-European" stance already looks more relevant to social advance than Labour's historic insular tendency.

ROBIN BLACKBURN
Editor, *New Left Review*
London

Peter Mandler Replies:

Sadly, I agree with Blackburn that *NLR*'s "new political economy" is likely to be as useful to popular campaigning as the "Nairn-Anderson theses." □

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The Last Page

Ten years ago, I signed my first contract for a book in the middle-grade fiction category—a Bobbsey Twins mystery about sunken treasure. For the treasure, I devised a gold Aztec statuette—priceless, potent, and ruthlessly pilfered. After the Bobbseys cracked the case, the statuette would make a heralded return to a Mexican museum. I turned in the book outline. According to the editors, everything worked fine except my choice of treasure, which was, horror of horrors, "educational." They wanted something "fun" for girls (the primary readers)—like jewelry. So I changed my Aztec statuette into a jeweled tiara and canned the museum.

Perhaps this made better Bobbsey sense, but it violated my pet notion about how young children often begin to acquire "high culture" (which I assume to be a good thing). Bits of information cropping up in, say, a children's novel reemerge years later as hooks onto which more knowledge can be hung. For me, at age eight, some of the best hooks came from a Bobbsey-type series about a girl named Maida. For example:

One day, Maida walks into the family mansion library while an art appraiser examines her father's latest acquisitions. The appraiser focuses on the distinctive red used for a woman's hair in one painting and the clear yellow and blue tones prominent in another. On the basis of these colors, he declares the first painting an authentic Titian and the second a true Vermeer. The scene was a throwaway, a few paragraphs that provided a nice setting for an unrelated conversation. Yet, when I started looking at art attentively as an adolescent, Titian and Vermeer seemed not only familiar ("There's the red hair"), but also approachable for some initial analysis ("What makes that yellow and blue so appealing?").

Given my educational impulses in middle-grade fiction, my latest gig—books based on a public-television series called *Wishbone*—has been heavenly. Wishbone is a dog who knows and loves great literature. In each half-hour episode, he imagines himself as the protagonist in a fully costumed dramatization of a favorite work—*Faust*, *Don Quixote*, *The Tempest*, *The Odyssey*. The show, now starting its third season, also includes stories from African-American, Native-American, Latin-American, and Eastern traditions. No parody, no spoof. Wishbone gives some factual information about each work and its author; then he literally throws himself into the story.

Apparently kids—from ages five through eleven—love the show. So do their parents. But one friend wondered if seeing an episode would result in children not reading the real literature because they already knew the story. It's the old "Classic Comics" dilemma: having ingested the comic-book version of *Ivanhoe*, would readers then bypass the original?

I'd say no for several reasons. Kids commonly read books they like more than once; a favorite book gets read a dozen or more times; knowing the story doesn't deter them. The full-length version of an abridged story has added appeal; you get more of what you already like. Did Charles and Mary Lamb really destroy anyone's appetite for Shakespeare? Moreover, think how many times we've all bought the book after we've seen the movie. An entire publishing niche exists for new editions of already published works tied to movie releases. A retelling in any medium can stimulate someone's checking out the original.

Finally, kids often meet up with a comic book, television show, or abridged version years before they can tackle the original. When they're older, how much remains from the first encounter? Probably no more than a few hooks—the equivalent of an engaging reference to Titian and Vermeer—which help to reel in the full-scale experience.

—JOANNE BARKAN□

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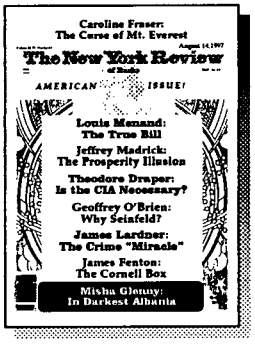

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